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NEW STATESMAN

James Fenton: Gang Warfare in Westminster
David Evans: The Most Highly Taxed Nation?
Mark Boxer: Blasphemy in my Youth
Peter Wilby: NUS in Trouble
Michael Leapman: So You Want to Join the Party
David Caute: Socialist Register
Frances Yates on Shakespearean Theatre
J. H. Plumb Eric Korn J. G. Ballard

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The Mixture as Before

There was nothing very significant about Mr Healey's Wednesday statement. Nothing, that is, except the political and economic vision which was comprised in it. After all the fevered anticipation, the Treasury's travail brought forth a mouse. It is difficult to see what all the discussion with the International Monetary Fund can have been about. The scope and scale of the decisions were almost telepathically predictable. So, for that matter, was the response of the Conservative front bench. 'We welcome,' said Sir Geoffrey Howe, 'this further evidence of his conversion.' Exactly so. As between the choice of a public expenditure cut and a tax increase, the Chancellor made the expected decision. So, also, with food subsidies and the housing capital programme. Not everybody may have anticipated his pruning of the Community Land Act and its budget, but the measure is all of a piece with the general strategy. Only the most naïve will be surprised at the decision to reduce overseas aid from its present embarrassingly low level. The sage Tory nods of approval at this economy speak volumes for the spirit and the attitudes which underlie the whole package.

Not that Mr Healey has been entirely without initiative. His announcement that the Burmah element of British Petroleum will be considered saleable up to the point at which the Government retains a 51-per-cent stake is welcome enough. There is nothing holy about this asset, or about the rest of 'our' oil resources. As long as overall control is inviolate, there need be no alarm. But the fact remains that oil shares have a good chance of being more valuable as time goes on. Sale should not be precipitate; doubtless Mr Healey understands this as his whole policy seems to be based on holding the ring until oil revenues are available.

Once or twice in his dismal presentation, Mr Healey appeared to distribute a crumb or two of reassurance to the 'alternative strategists'. Those who, like this paper, have argued for planning and industrial democracy over the last few years might have drawn comfort from his statement about increased resources for the National Enterprise Board. But, alas, financing has never been the real problem here. The problem has been that of the political will to implement and secure planning agreements – first as a means of raising exports, second as a method of longer-term structural change. The Tories oppose the first because they fear the second. They betray their own chronic short-sightedness by doing so. The Government still seems afraid of its own logic on the matter. Ten per cent on the beer and fags front is nearer the Treasury mark; it is what people expect and it does not bear on the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. Of such material is this Budget made.

In the first few moments of his speech, the Chancellor touched on the root of the matter. He spoke of an economy operating 'well below capacity' this year and the next. He scarcely needed to remind his listeners of the trade position. Yet he freely admitted that unemployment would continue to rise, he gaily announced cash limits on new construction, he dismissed the regional employment premium at a stroke. All this may help the books to balance, may help to comfort foreign creditors, may batten down the hatches until the oil comes on stream. But it does not address itself to the central problem of industrial recovery. On 30 November the *Wall Street Journal* had this to say:

> Mr Callaghan will be happy to learn, we're sure, that the *Wall Street Journal* will not only sympathise with him if these are indeed the conditions of the IMF, but will also cheer him if he gives the secret team the boot.

It was referring to the likelihood of public expenditure cuts, tighter monetary policy and taxation increases. Unlike the men from the IMF, elected representatives of the people have not been allowed to scrutinise the national books. That is another privilege deferred. But it is salutary to notice that there is more than one kind of capitalist orthodoxy and depressing to record that Labour has opted for the wrong one.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Gang Warfare in Westminster

The worst trade figures ever? The fourth budget of the year? The possible resignation of Frank Judd? What's happening? What's happening is the same sort of thing that happened in *The Anti-Death League* – we are entering a 'node'. A mysterious set of circumstances has combined to make life perfectly intolerable. I am reminded of Auden's imagined Alpine song: 'Oh my girl has a hare lip, and I've got a hole in my shoe!' While the node is upon us, nothing, but nothing, will work out all right. I *do* have a hole in my shoe, my bank is upset, I seem to have offended the *Guardian*, I think I'm about to go down with the 'flu – and on top of all this, there's Denis Healey . . .

The Chancellor rose on Wednesday to address a rowdy and a disrespectful House; by the time he sat down, his speech had been heard with contempt. The Tories were noisily jubilant, Labour Members smiled helplessly as if to say, 'Well he would say that wouldn't he?'. The typical Healey touches were all there: for instance, the cheerless and unconvincing assurance that the few increases in public expenditure would reduce unemployment in 1977 – reduce it, that is to say, in comparison with what it might have been under the remainder of his dispensation of that day. Then there was the charming considerateness with which he deferred the increase in tax on cigarettes and drink until after Christmas and the New Year. There was a lot in the mini-Budget for the Tories (for instance the emasculation of the Community Land Act) – precious little for Labour. Even Sir Geoffrey Howe, whose responses to Healey have in the past been about as strong as a pot of tea on the third infusion, managed to score a few points. His message – thanking the Chancellor for his acceptance of a great deal of Tory advice – was appropriate. True, defence had taken a knock. But then so had housing, roads, school building programmes (mysteriously this reduction is not going to affect needs) and school meals. The price of gas would rise. Overseas aid would fall. And against all this background the working people of the country would recognise the justice in the extra charges on luxury goods, because they would see, in a blinding flash, how an extra 4p on a packet of cigarettes would help employment.

We were now at the very nub of the node, for of course nobody believes for a moment that the electorate will treat the Healey package to any such generous consideration. Nor should they. A government which declares as a matter of principle that it will not use unemployment as an instrument for economic recovery, and then proceeds to do precisely that, is hardly likely to be given much of a hearing on the subject. Nor will the voters be much disposed to divide up the credit and debit sides of Labour's economic record in the way that Healey and his colleagues would wish. If the Left in Parliament have their fantasies, the Right are no less imaginative. They talk of their pet schemes as if they were in some way divorced from the overall economic strategy. They rise to address themselves to the subject of improving educational standards or training more people for industry as if such noble schemes could be realised on the basis of their statesmanlike speeches. Their view is always partial. Like the chameleon in *Hamlet* they eat the air promise-cramm'd. At least, however, on this occasion Healey did not have many promises with which to cram the air.

In the midst of all this despondency and crepuscular gloom, is it not surprising that Margaret Thatcher has allowed the Tories to become embroiled in one of the worst splits since she became leader? Is she not fatally hampered by the inability of her front bench to speak out loud and clear on the subject of devolution? Is she not foolish to have sacrificed the pleasant looks of Alick Buchanan-Smith, in return for the less savoury Teddy Taylor? Or is she not wise?

Certainly the Tories are missing a few tricks at the moment, and do not present as impressive a profile as the circumstances favour. And yet it may well be that they are in training to become a much more lethal team than hitherto. The row over devolution was carefully thought out. All the Tories were polled, and offered a choice of a free vote, a three-line whip or a reasoned amendment. The vast majority plumped for a three-line whip, but would have settled for a reasoned amendment. Francis Pym was given the task of devising such an amendment, but it appears that his reason was not up to the task. Hence the whip.

It is a popular thing. All over the Tory Party at the moment there are little gangs of anti-devolutionists growing up and recruiting members, devising their own little passwords and initiation ceremonies, and generally giving Westminster the air of a ropey Thames Valley prep-school: 'Meet us behind the hobbies hut in break, signed The Blue Hand Gang.' Maurice Macmillan, Julian Amery and George Gardiner run one of these gangs. They even have a newsletter marked 'Secret', which I believe you're supposed to eat as soon as you've read it; the password in this gang is Union Jack – 'Come and defend the Union Jack at 4.15 in Committee Room 14' – that sort of thing. Ian Gow runs another gang, and Michael Clark Hutchison a third. Hugh Fraser and Jonathan Aitken run a fourth, which met recently at Aitken's house in Phillimore Gardens in order to listen to Hugh Trevor-Roper on the threat to the Union. It attracted about 30 MPs, although many of these were suspected of being members of rival organisations. One MP to whom I spoke told me that he had been approached by six different gangs in the last week.

In such circumstances it was obviously wise of Thatcher to choose a Glaswegian to run her show. We may be sure that Taylor is a dab hand with the aerosol spray, the brass knuckles and the razor-blade, and if Ted Heath is discovered in a concrete overcoat ('Don't talk like that, Ted, it makes Maggie nervous!') the police will know whom to arrest. Watching Taylor's speech on Tuesday, and admiring the way he refused to be drawn on what the Tories actually *propose* by way of devolution, I began to think that Thatcher was on to a winner. Obviously it is incumbent on Labour to defend the anomalies in its own proposed scheme, and there was something pathetic about the way Bruce Millan, never the most impressive member of the cabinet, kept complaining 'Well what would you put in its place?'

Suppose, as is generally assumed in Westminster, Thatcher is working towards an all-out opposition to devolution, what are the dangers? If, as is also widely expected, the Welsh assembly has to be dropped, this is unlikely to cause much ill-feeling about the Tories. Suppose the whole thing founders, and does so after dominating the present session for 30 tedious days? The Scots Nats will be angry, yes, but there is no way that they could ever have been appeased. What will the English have to say about the matter? Will they round angrily on the Tories and accuse them of wasting the Government's time? Or will they merely consider that the Government has been wasting the country's time and money?

The legal hassles through which the legislation has to pass will not be followed with enormous enthusiasm by the public in England and Wales, whatever the feeling in Scotland. On the other hand the economic crisis will become a matter of increasingly intimate interest. An election follows, in which the Tories sweep in. And after that, God help us, Thatcher will consider she has a mandate to do whatever she likes. The gangs will inherit the government.

NEXT WEEK

The NEW STATESMAN will be a double issue covering the two weeks over Christmas and the New Year. Copies will be available in London on Wednesday, elsewhere on Thursday. The cover price of this 52 page issue will be 40p.

Contents will include short stories by Malcolm Bradbury and V. S. Pritchett, a Kingsley Amis poem, Alan Watkins on Drink, Russell Davies's 'The Santa Letters' and Widow Twankey's Christmas Quiz.

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David Evans

The Most Highly-Taxed Nation?

Nobody likes paying taxes, so it is not surprising that Opposition politicians have seized every chance they can to tell the British people that they are overtaxed and that is not just bad for them but for the country as well. What is surprising is the willingness of leading Labour politicians to jump on the anti-tax bandwagon when they know that it is based not on facts but on myths.

The public sector in Britain does not, except during deep depression, absorb more than its counterpart in most other countries. During the 1970s, Britain did not, on the whole, expand its public spending much faster than anybody else and certainly not fast enough to hold back the rest of the economy. And on the tax side, the total share of national income which the Government takes in taxes and social security contributions is lower than in most comparable countries. Until the very highest salary levels, anyone working for a living in Britain is likely to have kept a higher proportion of his wage-packet in Britain than is the case with many of our most successful competitors.

Take public spending, where the belief that this accounted for 60 per cent of the total economy sparked off a series of scares earlier this year about a threat to democracy. The Treasury has now cleaned up its calculations, and puts the new figure at 52 per cent. But even this is arrived at by including things which other countries exclude. Using one widely respected measure, the proportion for the UK in 1973 was 38.9 per cent, whilst that for 11 other European countries was 43.8 per cent. Even more strikingly, most of that large gap opened up during the late Sixties and early Seventies, since back in 1964 the total proportion being spent by the public sector was little different in the UK from that of other European countries. Of course, the structure of our public spending is different, but not in the way that might be expected on the basis of stories of caviar-scoffing social security scroungers. Britain spent, for example, just under 26 per cent of its gross national product on health, education and social services in 1974, compared with just over 29 per cent in Germany. Only defence does consistently well out of the British taxpayer. Faced with facts like these, the usual response of supporters of massive cuts is to admit that public spending in Britain in the past was not that high, but to say that in the past year or so it has got wildly out of hand.

The increase in public spending has been very sharp in the UK, but it has also been going up sharply in other countries. It *might* be true that all of the factual evidence of past years has been overturned in the past 18 months, but since most of the people who argue this have been arguing for huge public spending cuts for many years, it is hard to feel that they are unbiased in their assertions. The least one could ask from a Labour government which is about to hack away at public spending is that they produce some real evidence that there has been a change, rather than quote figures which are often factually incorrect.

For although we do not know exactly what has been the effect of extra public

'The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step or cry
To the children merrily skipping by . . .'

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spending in the past year, we do know something about the past few years. We know, for example, that increases in employment in the public sector have not on the whole lured away workers from manufacturing industry. Most of the new workers taken on by government are people like part-timers who otherwise would not have a job. We know that the higher unemployment figures are not caused by an overgenerous dole; they are caused by the collapse of jobs in manufacturing, and they would be made worse – (indeed *will* be made worse) by cutting the public payroll.

There is no excuse for a Labour government not knowing these things, nor for not saying them, except that they are inconvenient for an Administration which prefers to trust the City's instincts rather than its own knowledge. And there is even less excuse for the way in which the problems of poverty trap seem likely to be used as a justification for saying that Britain is heavily overtaxed.

The acknowledged authority on taxation is the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which each year compares total tax revenue in each of the 24 major industrial countries. As a percentage of our gross national product, we paid over 35.56 per cent to the Government as taxes and social security contributions in 1974. In France, the figure was 37.5 per cent, Germany 37.64 per cent, Belgium 38.13 per cent and in the rest of Northern Europe it was even higher; in the Netherlands it reached 45.18 per cent and in Denmark 46.68 per cent.

There are countries which are lower taxed, such as Japan and the United States, which do very well economically, but there are others such as Italy who perform almost as badly as we do. All of the countries which collect a higher proportion of their national income in taxes do better than we do by most economic tests. Why then do people complain more about taxes in Britain?

Partly because our taxes are highly visible. We tax income overtly, rather than charging a spectacularly high social security contribution which seems to be a kind of payment for social benefits. We keep changing the tax system, bringing in new taxes like VAT which everyone notices and abolishing old sources of tax revenue like Selective Employment Tax which were less obvious. And we have brought many people into the tax system who never paid tax before. But even the most obvious taxes are not that high in Britain for the great majority of people.

The average producer with two children paid tax at an average rate of 23 per cent in 1974, exactly the same as his German counterpart. The figure was considerably higher than in France or Belgium, it is true, but it was a lot lower than in the Netherlands or Sweden. It is true that marginal rates in Britain tend to be high, especially for the upper income groups. But generous tax allowances mean that even well-off people, like middle-managers earning £10,000 a year have low average rates of tax compared with their counterparts in Europe.

The Royal Commission report on Income and Wealth recently estimated that whereas such a man would pay 34.7 per cent of his income in tax in Britain, his counterpart in Germany would pay 36 per cent, in the USA 38 per cent, France 33 per cent and the Netherlands 48.4 per cent. Of course, it depends what you mean by 'counterpart'; all of these other countries pay managers much more, just as they pay everyone much more because they are richer, German managers might be earning twice as much as managers in Britain. But that problem applies to society as a whole. One of the arguments which many right-wing commentators bring out when pressed by the facts showing that Britain has fairly low taxes overall, is to argue that since we are a poor country we cannot afford to have as large a public sector as richer nations do. That argument doesn't stand up very well to the fact that we have lower public spending than many poorer countries, but it does touch on perhaps the real motive behind most agitation about taxes.

The higher rates of income tax only affect a fairly small proportion of the population, and most of them do not scale the real heights which are cited whenever British taxation is claimed to be unduly progressive. Nor, in spite of the oft-trumpeted effects on incentives, are there any recorded cases of people refusing pay rises because they would have to pay so much tax. But by pushing the line that everyone is overtaxed, they have succeeded in talking the Labour government into believing that millions of ordinary people are groaning under the burden of taxation. And that, if facts mean anything, just is not so.

Allan Ashbolt

Devaluation Down Under

Malcolm Fraser could hardly have chosen a more dramatic way to celebrate, albeit a little in advance of the actual anniversary date, the completion of one year as Australia's elected (in contradistinction to appointed) Prime Minister. Since he won the election in December 1975, holding the Australian dollar steady against foreign currencies has been central to his whole plan for revitalising the economy. But then on 28 November came his whirling dervish turnabout, in effect a repudiation of the policy direction he had been following for the past 12 months. He devalued by 17.5 per cent. What prompted this extraordinary course of action? Did the idea descend on him in a dream, as the plot of *The Green Goddess* was revealed to William Archer? Or was it the consequence of hard political cunning, a carefully nurtured plan of deception drawn up to bamboozle the bankers? In fact its genesis is rather more arcane, beginning with Fraser's belief that the so-called Man On The Land, a grossly sentimentalised figure from folklore who for generations was reputedly responsible for the bulk of Australia's overseas earnings through exports of wool, wheat and meat, is still the backbone of the nation. What he refuses to acknowledge, in his obsessive admiration for this prototype, is that there was never any Man On The Land; rather, there were a few men who owned the land and other men who worked either for the owners or so as to become owners.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the PM finds more affinity with his coalition partners in the Country Party (representing the squattocracy and the mining companies) than with his colleagues in the Liberal Party (representing big business and manufacturing). Still less is it a cause for astonishment that he should have been under persistent pressure from his Country Party wing to devalue the dollar, for the immediate cash benefits of any such manoeuvre would accrue, of course, to the primary producers, Australia's major exporters. But the precise manner of the Country Party coup deserves to be told, if only because it raises questions about the indivisibility of the Government, about the loyalty which Fraser can expect to command, and about the coherence of policies which seem to be based on short-run commercial advantages instead of on long-range national objectives.

Devaluation has been a possibility, at times a distinct probability, ever since the last (infamous) election. Fraser, however, not only dismissed devaluation as inappropriate to Australia's circumstances but, with a quasi-moral tone, kept condemning it as a weapon of trade war. In early November it was again tossed out by cabinet, despite indications of a huge outflow of capital (subsequently assessed at $269m.) during October. The crunch came on 10 November, when the Melbourne *Age* carried a story, on most counts fairly auhentic, that the cabinet was divided on the issue and that the PM himself was wavering. The result? An accelerated flight of capital, which by late November forced the PM's advisers to offer him two options: devalue or borrow $1,000m.

Brushing aside the recommendations of the Treasury and the Reserve Bank, Fraser declined, as he quaintly phrased it, 'to put this country further into hock'. (The PM was referring, in his rather vague vernacular, to straight borrowing from overseas sources, not to the balance of payments – which is by no means in deficit and which is likely, under the impact of devaluation, to develop a sizeable surplus.) For this decision he has been almost universally denounced by editorialists and commentators alike, not so much because of his change of mind with its overtones of hypocrisy and panic as because of the projected blow to consumer spending. Interest rates have already risen (and will go higher), the cost of imported items will zoom (even if some tariff charges are lowered), credit will get tighter and prices in general will bound

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upwards. The hip-pocket nerve, as Ben Chifley called it, is about to be touched; and the electoral response will inevitably be anti-government. But to quote the radical political economist, Professor E. L. Wheelwright, 'no measure which is opposed by both the Treasury and the Reserve Bank can be wholly bad'.

The crucial question is whether devaluation will boost employment opportunities. At present unemployment stands at 4.6 per cent of the workforce, with every likelihood of a worsening situation over the next few months as school-leavers enter the pool. According to the Treasurer, Mr Lynch, $7,000m. of foreign investment is even now in the pipeline, but it remains to be seen just how much of this expected inflow and of other capital funding attracted by devaluation is actually used on new development tasks. Employment prospects also depend partly on whether the manufacturing sector, already protected by a high tariff wall, can be rejuvenated and export-oriented; and partly on whether the domestic economy can absorb an expanded money supply without rapid revaluation. Under a government concerned to establish decent social priorities, devaluation might have offered some hope; under this Government it portends chaos.

One might avoid such forbidding terms if Fraser was not at this moment off and away on his ingrained routine of bashing the workers. He is not, it must be said in fairness, without a certain squirearchical compassion for the very poor and distressingly needy; but he obviously regards the workforce, or at least the majority part of it which has been organised into unions, as lacking in thrift, self-reliance, respect for betters and the cultivation of a proper pioneering spirit. He has even suggested, through his hapless Treasurer, that the Arbitration Commission brought on devaluation, because in its recent adjustment of earnings to quarterly cost-of-living rises it lifted wage levels by the full 2.2 per cent shown in the consumer price index. He now seems to be threatening to abridge or abolish the powers of the Commission, apparently on the ground that it is insufficiently pliable to government persuasion and far too inclined to yield feebly to the claims of the unions.

If he tries to fiddle with the Commission, he is in for trouble. Whatever the weaknesses, absurdities and pomposities of the Commission, it occupies a semi-sacrosant place in the Australian social formation, simply because it ritualises the conflict between capital and labour, thus symbolising the elusive democratic consensus. Constitutionally, it exists to prevent industrial disputes; but traditionally it is the nation's main wage-fixing instrument, with emotional as well as residual legal ties to the 1908 concept of a basic wage designed to keep a labourer, his wife and three children in 'frugal comfort'. Nevertheless, Fraser might risk attempting to dismantle it, in his continuing effort to depress wage expectations and suppress wage demands. He seems convinced that devaluation will succeed only if the workers accept his version of wage restraint. And though he surrendered on devaluation, he is unlikely to do so on wages. Devaluation was in the interests of his class; wage rises erode those interests.

Moreover, he is deliberately divisive in his attitudes, unafraid of confrontation. For all his ideological pretences, he is in essence a typical politician in the Tory mould – cynical, opportunistic, dominant over the bureaucracy, accustomed to the uses and techniques of power. As inflation inevitably mounts, he will become increasingly unpopular with the electorate; as the unions challenge him, he will be forced into many retreats and withdrawals; as his ideological front collapses, he will find it difficult to maintain party harmony and coalition unity; but to paraphrase Ted Wheelwright, no politician who rejects the advice of both the Treasury and the Reserve Bank can be wholly incompetent.

Sydney

Michael Leapman

So You Want to Join the Party?

Now that the NEC has again bent its collective mind to the vexed question of the infiltration of the Labour Party by alien elements, we have to start thinking of ways to combat the menace. I suggest that anyone who wants to join the party in future be subjected to a short written examination, to test the correctness of his attitudes and the level of his political awareness. As a service to democracy, I submit a sample paper herewith. Try it on yourself, and find out how you rate from the chart at the end. And remember, it is not necessarily best to get the answers right.

1: The Militant Tendency is:
(a) a punk rock group
(b) a left-wing faction
(c) a right-wing journal
(d) a psychological condition?

2: The aim of the Labour Party is:
(a) to bring into public ownership the means of production, distribution and exchange
(b) to achieve and retain office
(c) to smash capitalism?

3: If James Callaghan were to fall under a bus – after the cuts, an increasingly unlikely eventuality – who would you favour to succeed him:
(a) Reg Prentice
(b) Michael Foot
(c) Tony Benn
(d) Sir Harold Wilson?

4: You have just joined the party. At your first ward meeting seven people turn up – a record attendance, the chairman says. One introduces a resolution against spending cuts, and is supported by two others. The remaining three oppose it. How do you vote:
(a) in support of the resolution
(b) against it
(c) abstain?

5: Bearing in mind Sir Harold Wilson's warning about 'bedsitter infiltrators', do you think property ownership should henceforth be a condition of party membership?

6: There is a move in the constituency to censure your MP because of his right-wing attitude to spending cuts, Namibia and the Agee/Hosenball deportations. Do you:
(a) record your disagreement with his attitude, but defend to the death his right to be his own man
(b) support him
(c) call for his resignation
(d) manoeuvre to outflank his opponents?

7: Karl Marx was:
(a) famous political thinker
(b) a famous American film comedian
(c) a salt beef merchant in Whitechapel?

8: Which of these papers do you read:
(a) *Labour Weekly*
(b) *News Line*
(c) *Militant*
(d) *Daily Telegraph*
(e) *Morning Star*?

9: Have you ever attended a political meeting or demonstration addressed by Clive Jenkins?

10: Do you now hold, or have you ever held, any firm views on anything?

How to mark your test:

1: (a) 5; (b) 10; (c) 0; (d) 0.
2: (a) 5; (b) 0; (c) 10.
3: (a) 0; (b) 5; (c) 10; (d) 0.
4: (a) 10; (b) 5; (c) 0.
5: Ten for no, none for yes.
6: (a) 0; (b) 0; (c) 10; (d) 5.
7: (a) 10; (b) 0; (c) 0.
8: Score two points for each. (Better to read the *Daily Mirror* or for that matter nothing at all.)
9: Ten for yes, none for no.
10: Ten for yes, none for no.

How you rate:

Maximum marks are 100. Score above 70 and I am afraid there is no place for you in a cosy social democratic party like ours. You are quarrelsome, politically aware and take up extreme positions. Moreover, you read too many papers and are far too well-informed on matters of the day for our broad-based party. In short, you are an entryist. Go and join Vanessa's lot, there's a good chap.

Score between 30 and 70 and we will accept you into the party, but with reservations. Be careful of who makes friends with you. You might find yourself lured into extreme positions which you would later regret. Take up a quiet hobby, like gardening, to take your mind off politics.

Score below 30, and welcome aboard, comrade! You are just the kind of new member our party needs. You support your sitting MP and have no truck with airy-fairy resolutions about distant places of which we know little. You read little and think less. You will be an asset to our dwindling membership.

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Mark Boxer

Blaspheming in My Youth

Blasphemy as an indictable offence is extremely rare. Between Shelley and the present case against *Gay News* one minor diversion occurred in the early Fifties, when the undergradute magazine *Granta* was banned for publishing a blasphemous poem, and as the responsible editor I was rusticated for the remainder of my last term. This led to the first student demonstration in this country, though it took the form of a 'funeral' and was conducted with rather more good nature than most of its successors. As the hero of the hour I remember being against the idea of a funeral, partly because I didn't know my place. In the end I watched from an upper room opposite the pepperpot gate of King's, as Hugh Thomas, then as now a Conservative, made an impassioned speech. As the horse-drawn hearse with its empty coffin moved away, a distinguished don, John Saltmarsh, told me about the last undergraduate funeral he had witnessed. Two Kingsmen, sent down for the usual vice, had *shared* the coffin.

The poem that caused some anonymous Mrs Whitehouse of the day to complain to the Vice-Chancellor was an attack on God for taking a permanent tea-break:

Let God get up, the slug-a-bed
Cosmic snail with tortoise head,
Ten arms, five legs and a gross of eyes,
With a do-nothing God I can't sympathise.

You're a silly old thing. I'm telling you straight,
You're smelly and ugly and out of date,
If you won't get up then abdicate,
At Estoril they'll open the gate

To your retinue and revenue of hate.

And so on. Except that the author, now Sir Anthony de Hoghton, couldn't resist an obvious (Australian?) rhyme for God. After a few days I was summoned to a dim room in some distant college. I was accused of blasphemy, then as now a common law offence. I was rather surprised on entering the Proctors' rooms to find also in attendance a plain-clothes policeman wearing his raincoat indoors. I still consider the Proctors behaved badly by interrogating me in front of the police. By university statute I was supposed to answer their questions truthfully. And yet at the same time I inevitably must incriminate myself with the police. A friendly QC had given his opinion that I would be found guilty.

The Proctors were well within their rights to discipline me. The statutes say (among other injunctions against giving tradesmen promissory notes, discharging fire-arms and taking part in gaming transactions) that they can prevent students 'from practices that are inconsistent with gentlemanly behaviour . . . They take cognizance in general of any violation of morality and decorum.' They made however two tactical mistakes. I was instructed not to discuss the affair with any outside body. 'Outside body' in this instance was clearly a euphemism for 'the press'. This injunction I adhered to. They were not aware, however, that when the news inevitably circulated several undergraduates would be only too happy to inform the London papers. This was done not only for the money: Cambridge was beginning to be aware of the rat-race to come. Links were being made with future employers. Some aspiring Hickey rang the press and Fleet Street descended on Cambridge.

Here the Proctors made their second mistake. Presumably rattled by the sympathy my case was getting, one of them gave a 'quote' to the press. The senior of the two told *The Times* that the poem was 'uncomplimentary to God'. For those with a nose for theology this was thought to be rather more blasphemous than the offending verse. Inevitably the affair blew up into a kind of bogus event. There were protests, a debate in the Union condemning the Proctors (won 104 to 46). *Varsity* came out with a black border; a petition was organised. It was signed among other distinguished figures by E. M. Forster, who in his short note described the Proctors' decision as 'curious'. I received encouraging letters from free-thinkers living in service flats in Buckingham Gate and elsewhere.

My college was very much on my side. The Provost, Sir John Sheppard, wrote to *The Times* to correct an item and to dissociate Kings's from the University authorities' action. Some dons considered reading the poem into the senate record. According to one Sunday paper 'A senior don told me: "We feel that this matter should not have been dealt with by the suppression of the magazine, although many of us feel the editor should have been disciplined . . . Feeling is so strong among many of the dons that a plan was on foot today to prevent the two Proctors being re-elected . . ." This move failed because the necessary 24 hours' notice in writing to the Vice-Chancellor before today's meeting was not given.'

Undergraduate ingenuity was easily capable of balking the Proctors' attempt to close the magazine. It was discovered that *Granta* had been started in the 1890s when a previous publication, *Gadfly*, had been suppressed. It was a simple move to relaunch *Gadfly* for the year that *Granta* was banned. The Proctors were equally inept in the date they allowed me to return. Consulting their university diaries they decided to allow me back on the day after the last May ball which happened to be at my own college, King's. However, the Proctors failed to remember that balls are inclined to last rather longer than midnight. So accompanied by a peer's daughter who had previously declined my invitation, I returned at midnight, rather like Cinderella in reverse.

During some recent student troubles a fellow member of his noble house asked Lord Annan why he didn't send the offenders down. He replied that in Mark Boxer's day it had been easy; but today if sent down the modern student wouldn't go.

Peter Wilby

When Students Grow Up

After the collapse of its travel and printing companies, with heavy losses both to its finances and to its reputation, the National Union of Students conference in Blackpool might have indulged itself in an orgy of recrimination. Instead, the delegates closed ranks, rapped their leaders on the knuckles with a few motions of censure, rejected proposals that Charles Clarke, the President, should resign, and accepted, almost down to the last detail, their executive's advice on the future of the remaining service companies. The NUS and Mr Clarke were saved.

That, perhaps, was the best that could be expected of the conference. Otherwise, it reflected all the worst characteristics of student politicians. The speeches were trite and repetitive, slogans and clichés tumbling over jargon in a syntactical maze. The best arguments were deployed in support of points of procedural order, which took more of the conference's time than any single debate.

The high point, which could only be achieved by the agile young minds of the nation's educated elite, was when a vote had to be taken on the procedure for a vote on the procedure for a vote on the procedure for a re-vote on government economic policy. The argument, in so far as it was possible to decipher it from several pages of eye-straining type, was over whether the NUS should support import controls. From all the fuss, you would have thought that customs and excise men were waiting to dash to the Channel ports at a word from Charles Clarke.

A third of the conference's time was gone by then, and the only other significant issue that had been decided was that Sir Keith Joseph should be asked to leave. The debate on the Government's threat to with-

This Ulster

☐ One solicitor said: 'Most people in Ulster are trying to lead as normal lives as possible. They enter into contracts, have traffic accidents and are injured while working in factories.' – *The Times* (Geoff Little)

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draw student social security entitlements was squeezed into 30 minutes on the last day. The NUS could not find time to say anything on the threats to overseas students, on the Prime Minister's call for a national education debate, on the closure of teacher education colleges.

Is the NUS, then, worth saving? In his opening address, a minor classic of NUS-speak, Mr Clarke argued that it was. 'We face a challenging task . . . unity and strength . . . our movement . . . buffeted by many winds . . . sustained and determined action . . . let there be no mistake . . . attacks upon the student body . . . militant programme of action . . . forge a union . . . concrete propositions . . . this great union . . . fight victimisation . . . fight for democracy . . . away from sectional battles . . . heal our wounds . . . national voice of the student body . . . fairer and juster society . . . all strive.' The conference was so impressed by these phrases that it spent the rest of the weekend repeating them. Every speech had to contain references to the need for a fighting, campaigning, united, mass union, regardless of the subject under discussion. At times, it seemed that the only contest between the various political groups was over who could shout 'fight, campaign and unite' the loudest.

The rest of us must be allowed some scepticism. First, the NUS frequently hasn't the faintest idea what it is fighting or campaigning for or against. Once again, the conference confirmed that student unions should not allow platforms to 'racist and fascist organisations' and should use any means short of 'acts of individual violence' to prevent them being heard. It had a long and hair-splitting debate over whether unions should simply refrain from inviting racists and fascists to speak or whether, if someone else invited them, they should disrupt the meetings. Yet no one attempted to define precisely which groups ought to be deprived of free speech in either of these ways. It is one thing to ban Mr Kingsley Read, of 'one down, one million to go' fame; it is quite another to ban Sir Keith Joseph. The deplorable scenes involving the latter (for which the executive, the majority of whom had voted for his expulsion, later apologised) betrayed an infantile inability to distinguish fascists from maverick Conservatives.

Second, the conferences always cheerfully vote for campaigns and days of action over every conceivable student grievance and over every deserving oppressed minority group, whether in Britain or abroad. The executive is instructed as firmly to overthrow the South African government as it is to organise marches for better student grants. The language of priorities is not the language of the NUS. One reason for the débâcle of the service companies was that it had never been clear whether the service companies were supposed to subsidise the NUS or the NUS to subsidise the service companies. (Curiously, it was the Broad Left, not their right-wing Labour predecessors, who, in effect, chose the latter.)

Students need a strong national union, and they need it now more than ever. The country's economic difficulties, the attacks on public spending, the Western world's growing disillusion with the value of education and particularly higher education: all these have combined to create serious threats to student living standards and prospects. It is easy to laugh at the NUS with its postures and inflated rhetoric, allied to its lack of any genuine bargaining power.

But, without the union, would the unemployment of newly-qualified teachers have been highlighted so dramatically last summer? Would the Government have prevaricated quite so long over increases in overseas students' fees? Would it have been prepared to review its proposals for denying social security benefits to students?

The danger for the NUS is that, in the hard times to come, it may appear to lose more battles than it wins. The union may influence the Government to modify, but not to abandon, proposals to cut spending on higher education and students. Without the travel service and the insurance company (which the conference agreed to sell) the NUS will find it harder to restrain unions that want to disaffiliate over some political quarrel. It can still command self-interested loyalty through its new marketing and discount services. But, more important, it has to convince local unions that their subscription fees (which some find increasingly difficult to afford) are being spent on the protection of student interests and not on sectarian political adventures. In return for their cheap air flights to Athens students were prepared to allow the NUS leaders their flights of revolutionary fantasy. They will strike a harder bargain in future.

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	1976	1975
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Funds Employed	**£73,051,000**	£62,959,000

Dividends per Ordinary Share

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Total for the year—	**3.326p**	3.023p
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John Griffith

The English Connection

We all know that a White Paper states government policy and is to be distinguished from a Green Paper which is a consultative document inviting our views and perhaps itself being followed by a White Paper – unless the Government, having heard our views, or taking fright for some other reason, decides to give up the whole thing. What then is this?* A White Paper subtitled 'A Consultative Document'. Damned clever, these politicians. Keep you guessing to the end.

Well, maybe not quite clever enough on this occasion. Some years ago there was a Green Paper on the reform of local government finance. It itemised all possible alternative sources of revenue and in turn knocked each one hard on the head so that on the last page all we were left with was our old friend the rates which was all we had started with on the first page. There was no point in our giving any views. But we were allowed to clap our chopped hands, throw up our sweaty nightcaps, and utter a deal of stinking breath. That was a Green Paper but not a 'Consultative Document'. Now we have a White Paper which says it is a consultative document. Spot the deliberate mistake.

In this White Paper, there is no doubt about the invitation to consultation. Eleven questions, some subdivided, are proposed for discussion and 'Government Departments will be writing direct to bodies with which they are regularly in contact seeking their views'. But anyone can play – by writing to the Constitution Unit, Cabinet Office, Great George Street, London SW1.

'What the Government now want is to find out in which ways people in England would like to see our institutions develop.' However, before you start hammering away on a typewriter or inking your little fingers, I have to tell you that it won't make any difference what you say. There isn't going to be any English Dimension to Devolution. There isn't even going to be an English Connection. There's going to be nothing at all. For this White Paper is merely a very slightly more subtle version of the technique employed in the Green Paper already mentioned. Each Aunt Sally is carefully set up and as carefully knocked down. Every time a coconut. Come, with me, to the fair.

These are the possibilities in order of diminishing importance:

(1) *An English Assembly on the lines of the Scottish Assembly.* Not on. Because it would 'damage the structure of the United Kingdom', involve 'an enormous diminution of the role of Parliament', introduce federation, and truncate the role of central government (otherwise known as the powers of the authors of the White Paper).

(2) *A number* [the White Paper says a *series* but it can't mean that] *of regional assemblies with legislative powers.* Not on. Same objections as before plus a new one: it would lead to 'possibly marked differences over short distances'. It is bad having them over long distances like in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh. But over short distances – oh the horror of that!

(3) *Regional elected authorities with executive powers transferred from central government departments*, like the Welsh Assembly, with block grants. Not on. Because of 'far-reaching' effects on the present structure of ministerial and parliamentary responsibilities; and 'far-reaching' constitutional implications; and 'serious administrative problems'; and 'vastly more difficult' for the Government to manage the United Kingdom economy; and drawing boundaries would involve 'substantial difficulties'.

(4) *Regional elected authorities with executive powers transferred from local authority and nominated bodies.* Not on. Because this would involve 'comprehensive reorganisation of local government' and of other bodies which have existed for only three years; and those serious administrative problems again; and the boundaries again.

(5) *Strengthened regional advisory bodies*, maybe based on Economic Planning Councils. Here I admit there is a possible chink of light because no positive and damning objections are listed. Of course they would have no legislative or executive powers at all.

(6) *Limited local government reform*, like redistribution within the present two-tier system, the adjustment of boundaries, and joint committees between local authorities. What this has to do with the English dimension of devolution is not mentioned. Moreover it appears that this approach 'carries its own dangers', and the existing organisation could be 'affected by uncertainties' which might 'hinder forward planning and efficient administration'. So there's not much hope for that either.

To turn from these absurdities, it is apparent both from the Devolution Bill and from this White Paper that one of the trickiest problems is how to deal with the repercussions in England of the setting up of the Scottish Assembly. Neal Ascherson rightly emphasised this recently in these pages (NS 3 December). The White Paper speaks of not devolving to Scotland or Wales power over activities 'which substantially affect people living elsewhere', of the Government's right to intervene where Assembly action or inaction 'threatens to prejudice an interest' of the United Kingdom, and of avoiding 'side-effects' for those of us living in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The principal concern of Englishmen has been fears that devolution will lead to an accretion of powers and influence to the Assemblies and Executives likely to prejudice the industrial and economic interests of, especially, the poorer English regions. Indeed this has been the centre of English opposition to devolution. The White Paper puts on a bold front. 'These fears', it says, 'are in fact groundless'. There follow 24 paragraphs of argument seeking to show that regional policies to promote investment and employment, the devolved financial powers, and the development agencies are all firmly under the control of the central government which will protect the interests of the English regions.

Had the rest of the White Paper been less devious in its construction, the irrelevance of these arguments might have been attributed to ignorance. But, on the circumstantial evidence, this attempt to meet the objections must also be regarded as deliberately evasive. For the fears of the North West and North East are not founded on a misunderstanding of the statutory powers of the Government. They are founded on the belief that the political clout which Scotland and Wales can deliver through their Assemblies will enable them to obtain a greater share of regional aid than at present. It is no good the Government beating its collective breast and saying 'Trust Us'. Political support and political convenience can, like governments, be bought. And will be. The English regions have no institutional unity and therefore they are weak. That, as of course the Government knows, is where the fears are grounded.

This White Paper is a disgrace. It is a specious document which, if it were intelligently written, would be merely dishonest because I do not believe for a moment that any real intention lies behind it. But it is contemptible in its assumption that its arguments are plausible enough to fool, not only what it calls the average elector, but all the people all the time.

***Devolution: The English Dimension – A Consultative Document** *HMSO* 45p

Margarita Jimenez

High Noon in Madrid

Within the space of a week and just before the country voted on constitutional reform, three major political events took place in Madrid. Each made the position of the government more difficult and each threatens to cause an even sharper political polarisation. To start with, the still illegal main Socialist Party held its first authorised congress in Spain since 1932. Secondly – two days later, and five days before the referendum, Santiago Carrillo, secretary-general of the illegal Communist Party, defied a Government ban on his presence in Spain by making a dramatic appearance at a clandestine press conference in Madrid attended by 70 Spanish and foreign journalists. Thirdly, and only one day afterwards, Oriol y Urquijo, president of the Council of State and closely woven to the *Franquista* system was kidnapped by five armed men said to be from the revolutionary Left. They demanded the release of 15 major political prisoners and denounced the referendum as a farce. The Communist Party has energetically repudiated this action but the

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Right makes no distinction between Carrillo's press conference and the kidnapping. They will exert as much pressure as they can on a Government they consider has grown soft and is showing dangerous signs of weakness as left-wing pressure grows.

At the beginning of the week Madrid was transformed into a European socialist capital. More than 3,000 people packed the congress hall, dominated by the slogan 'Socialism is Liberty', or watched from a closed circuit television room as leading figures of European socialism, in Spain for the first time since the civil war, expressed their solidarity with the Spanish Socialist Party. Their presence broke the black legend Spain has been living under for over 40 years. Olof Palme, who collected money in the streets of Stockholm during last year's FRAP and ETA executions, Willy Brandt, journalist in the Republican zone during the civil war and president of the Socialist International, and Michael Foot who condemned British, French and German non-intervention, were wildly applauded. Both the 87-year-old Italian Socialist leader Pietro Nenni – evoking the Madrid of '36 ('they shall not pass') – and François Mitterand's rousing speech brought the audience to their feet: with clenched fists they sang the *Internationale*. Old men, many of them members of the Socialist Party for the last 50 years, were in tears. Although the moderate centre of the party triumphed – leaving all options open for going into next year's elections – the sight of a figure on the last day of the congress running down the hall holding aloft a Republican banner cannot have left the Government too happy.

Two days later in Madrid, an unmistakable Santiago Carrillo, dressed in a dark suit and tie, blue-and-white striped shirt and comb in his jacket pocket, walked into a room surrounded by most of the Communist executive committee. We had been summoned under strictest Party security to different rendezvous and at different times. We had been divided into groups and then driven by silent and apprehensive members of the Communist Party to an abandoned flat in the centre of Madrid. A self-confident and smiling Señor Carrillo promptly admitted to having lived in Madrid since last February and firmly insisted that he had no intention of leaving the country. Equally spectacular was his announcement that the Party would present candidates for both Houses of the new Parliament in the first half of January under the Communist banner. Expounding his party's reasons for abstaining in the referendum, he said that the Government's reform was neither democracy nor the sovereignty of the people.

Next day Oriol y Urquijo, ex-Minister of Justice, was kidnapped. The kidnapping is bound to strengthen the right-wing pressure on the Government. Indeed, the process has already started. The Interior Minister has ordered police to search for, and try to arrest, Santiago Carrillo. Negotiations between the opposition and the Prime Minister, Adolfo Suarez, which had been scheduled to take place last week, are now paralysed. In such a context, it will take more than a referendum to demonstrate that Spain is on the road to democracy.

Madrid

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Profile: John Biffen

The Tory Tribuneite

British politics do seem to be getting more interesting. Of all Mrs Thatcher's new entourage, the most generally popular man is the Tory MP who has voted more often than any other in the Labour lobby. John Biffen's opposition to the Common Market and to the Prices and Incomes policy meant that there was no place for him under the 'shut your trap' regime of Edward Heath. Today it means rehabilitation, recognition and an alarming capacity for saying things (like 'If I was Labour I'd be in the *Tribune* Group') which usually mark nature's backbenchers. Indeed, many of his admirers were beginning to worry that he was just that. Even when Biffen first entered the Commons as member for Oswestry in 1961, Anthony Howard wrote in *Town* that he had 'the makings of a Tory left-wing rebel'. At the time the statement was broadly true. Biffen, a scholarship and Cambridge boy from a very modest background, was a fairly typical pro-European business consultant turned MP. Years of work for Tube Investments in Birmingham had given him the necessary experience for such a role, and he had defeated the notorious Major William Friend (an anti-Wind of Change man with dubious connections with the League of Empire Loyalists) for the nomination. But it did not take Biffen very long to grow tired of the hucksterish politics practised by Macmillan. He became less identikit by the day, took seven months to make his maiden speech – a record until the advent of Frank MacManus – and developed a secret and growing admiration for Gaitskell.

He has, in a way, always been rather too prone to see the other chap's point of view. He was Benn's 'shadow' at Energy until recently and must be one of the few Tories to admit admiring him. Biffen hardly reads the paper, claims to be the only MP to have completely ignored the Levin column and *The Times* in general, and makes an exception solely in the case of the *FT*. Benn generously sent him copies of press cuttings about Energy; he used to read about himself gratefully. Now he is unaware how most papers record his performance.

But behind the apparent diffidence there is a real conversion from Tory meritocracy, which took place over a number of years. He had an initial respect for Heath, who repaid it by getting Douglas-Home to give him a junior spokesmanship under Ernest Marples. That in itself was a somewhat disillusioning experience. Then his growing conviction that the Common Market was not for Britain led him into a generalised distrust of authority and Establishment which persists to this day. The fact that he represented a rural seat with a nonconformist tradition was probably a help in sustaining this position. Oswestry is in the thrall of St Asaph's at one end, and was one of the few English seats where Welsh Disestablishment was a live issue. Biffen, whose voice still has a genuine West Country burr (he first drew breath in Bridgwater) always quotes *A Shropshire Lad* at his eve of poll meetings.

Biffen's formative period did, however, contain one influence which persists to this day. Although at Cambridge he was fairly orthodox (one of his regrets is the encouragement he gave to Tam Dalyell as a student Tory) and befriended men like Geoffrey Howe, whom he still rather likes, he did once chance to hear Enoch Powell. It was not love at first sight, exactly, but a definite impression was made which has never abated. Biffen's later industrial experience in the Midlands enhanced his admiration for the stark, staring genius and for some time in the 1960s he was practically Powell's fag on the backbenches. The introduction of the racial factor in 1968 did leave Biffen slightly discountenanced, and although he agrees with much of Powell's stand on the issue he has always refused to have any truck with the demand for repatriation. Several of Powell's other beliefs have left their impress on him all the same. There is a striking coincidence between Enoch's view of business collaborators with statism, and Biffen's use of the term 'boardroom blackshirts' – a phrase that ought to be better known than it is – to describe the sort of corporate state stuffed men whom he used to run into when handling North Sea barons was part of his shadow portfolio. Equally, he finds considerable common ground with Powell on the vexed issue of the unity of the United Kingdom. His speech this year to the Conservative Political Centre, entitled 'A Nation in Doubt', expresses great regret at the severance of traditional bonds between Tories and Ulster Unionists. Last week in Milford Haven he declared that 'The Union is living on borrowed time. The recovery of a *British* sense of success and ultimately a

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British sense of defiance is an imperative' (italics added). The Devolution Bill he emphatically rejects as a false solution.

And, of course, there was the Common Market, where he has his place on the Honour Roll of Tory opponents to entry. Friends report that he was greatly relieved at the victory of the Marketeers in the referendum, not because of any Damascene conversion but because it depoliticised the issue and left him free to re-enter Conservative main-stream discussion. He had taken the obligation of opposition seriously. When, after the election of October 1974, Heath asked him to rejoin the team, Biffen replied that he would do so on two conditions. The first was that any correspondence between the two should be published. The second was that such correspondence would reveal on Biffen's part a desire for a new leader. This must rank as one of the most comprehensive 'thanks but no thanks' episodes of recent politics. When Francis Pym, Tory chief whip, was going round twisting the arms of EEC waverers, and one of the aggrieved sufferers asked him why he didn't go and bully Biffen for a change, Pym is reported as replying: 'My dear chap, there's no point in trying.'

It may or may not be clear from all this that John Biffen is a very nice person. He detests intolerance, and with Ian Gilmour abstained on Henry Brooke's persecution of Chief Enahoro. On issues of morality and liberty he is generally speaking a liberal. He is entirely repelled by the red-baiting raucousness of men like young Winston Churchill, and thinks the shadow cabinet should have nothing to do with such mindless bullying tactics. As a determined and old-fashioned patriot himself, he respects it in others and, somewhat to the annoyance of a few of his colleagues, regards *Tribune* types as rather more sound on national integrity than many Tories. He insists that there is no necessary antagonism between Labourism and monetarism – an opinion which although doubtless correct is still more indigestible to most audiences.

By the same token, bureaucracy and pseudo-modernism are anathema to him. This is more a question of instinct than intellect, and reflects his tweedy and bucolic side. But it sits well with his version of free-enterprise philosophy; a philosophy which is just as much at home when stressing the merits of competition as it is when counselling extreme caution on the fast-breeder reactor. Both, in a separate but related fashion, coincide with his hostility to Leviathan.

Politically, he hopes to capture the working class for radical Toryism by a combined appeal to selfishness and self-interest. In Biffen's opinion there are not a few skilled workers who would rather have more discretionary income and less NALGO and NUT, not to mention less NUPE and fewer adventure playgrounds for immigrant children at the public expense. Who is to say that with Labour at such a nadir he may not be making a shrewd guess? His favourite example, drawn from his period at Energy, is that of the North Sea rig-workers who demanded that private medical treatment under BUPA should be written into their contracts. These are the sort of 'risk-takers' that he really likes, and they are worth distinguishing from the sort of fat and oleaginous cats which the Tory party usually admires.

Not even the chairman of his Conservative association knows how Biffen voted in the leadership stakes – which says something for the atmosphere of Oswestry Conservatism as well as something for the unpredictability of Biffen himself. There is an outside chance that he voted for Geoffrey Howe at some point, and thus for a man who could be said to be 'coming round' to Biffenite economic views without caving in to the social primitivism of Mrs Thatcher and her pre-Beveridge associates. Certainly the recent story that Biffen turned down the shadow Chancellorship is untrue. He was not offered it, and did not solicit it either. He would, indeed, have been happy to remain at Energy and play himself in. And he had no desire to do down the increasingly hapless Sir Geoffrey by stealing his place on the front-bench.

This slightly languid and bloodless approach has not prevented Biffen from re-emerging quite fast from obscurity and rebellion. The secret of his success is that he always waited to be asked, and seldom if ever 'pushed'. But this style is less effective the nearer you take it to the top. When criticising Robert Carr's taking of emergency powers in 1973, and the streak of anti-coalminer sentiment that they embodied, Biffen warned of the distinction between the flamboyance of a Churchill and the sagacity of a Baldwin. It all depends, in that distinction, whether you are referring to 1926 or 1936. Biffen just may find that his time comes around without him having to lift a finger.

Jeremy Bentham

Distaste of Punishment

We are all too accustomed to some of our judges delivering themselves of homilies when they are sentencing offenders to terms of imprisonment. Judges who indulge their moralistic appetites only do harm to the dignity of the law. By preaching pompous sermons they reveal both their own misplaced sense of self-importance and exceed the bounds of judicial duty. Their proper function is to impose the appropriate legal penalty and not to make moral judgments of human weaknesses. Judges should stick to the task of stating the policy considerations and principles underlying the sentence they pass. And on the whole fewer and fewer judges depart from this precept, although there are still too many notable exceptions.

Just as unwholesome is a practice that prevails of shedding crocodile tears when judges feel compelled to pass sentence upon some peculiarly pathetic figure in the dock. Mercy is an admirable trait, even in judges. It should not, however, be reflected in the words used unless matched by appropriate action. Mr Justice Stocker recently had to deal at Chelmsford Crown Court with a case of attempted murder where a father, provoked by years of having to witness his daughter's sufferings at the hands of an unkind, even cruel, husband tried to kill his son-in-law. The judge is reported as saying when passing sentence: 'It is just about the saddest case that has come before the court. You were of exemplary character before this incident. You are a mild man and, I have no doubt, a nice one. It is my unhappy duty to impose a custodial sentence.' At this point one can well imagine a choked sob and a loud blow of the nose emanating from underneath the ermine gown and the horsehair perched on the judge's head. One might have expected as accompaniment a sentence of two years' imprisonment suspended for two years, thus reflecting society's disapproval of the violent conduct but sparing the wretched man the indignity and suffering of actual incarceration. Not a bit of it: the sentence was a swingeing five years' imprisonment. Doubtless Mr Justice Stocker, a mild and nice man, full of human compassion, was sincere in his expression of unhappiness at having to put the man into one of Her Majesty's insalubrious prisons. But why proclaim these commendable sentiments in open court if he was then going to negate their natural consequences?

The Judge's action was a reflection of a common propensity among the judiciary to retreat behind the legalistic pretence that they are only the agents of a punitive society – 'the law requires me . . .', 'public policy demands . . .', or slightly more casuistically, 'Parliament had laid down that . . .' Judges of all persons do not lack self-confidence in the rightness of their own actions. They are not helpless to resist fulfilling an unpleasant task from which they would dearly like to escape. After all we are constantly reminded that the virtue of our sentencing system is that it gives a very wide discretion to the judges to do what they think is right.

Either five years' imprisonment was an appropriate sentence or it was not. If it was, then please spare the prisoner and the rest of us an act of gross self-indulgence. The sentencer may sleep easier in his bed having publicly confessed his great sadness at what he felt bound to do. But what about the convicted man who for the first time in middle age must undergo the rigours of prison life? His dreams in a cell – built for one but probably to be shared with two others – will not be sweetened by the judge's expression of regret. Nor can it be argued that the judge needed to mouth his sorrow in order to clarify the principles of sentencing policy involved in the case. A case like this reawakens fundamental doubts about whether judges are equipped to be good sentencers. One only hopes that the Court of Appeal will speedily right this particular wrong.

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London Diary

☐ When I was active in CND I often met scientists who told me that they, too, deplored nuclear weapons but that nuclear power would be highly beneficial for peaceful purposes. I hesitated to disagree with them and only Priestley had an unblemished record as an opponent of nuclear power in any shape or form. Now Priestley's forebodings are coming true. In Russia a vast area was made uinhabitable for generations as long ago as 1958. The disaster has been concealed for nearly 20 years. Last October there was a similar leak at Windscale on a smaller scale. It, too, was concealed even from the minister ultimately responsible. When it belatedly came to light an official at Windscale dismissed it as a 'non-event'. In much the same way Trotsky is now in Russia a 'non-person' and many people no doubt wish he was here. Despite this the leak really happened and Trotsky really existed. We are jeopardising the health and perhaps the very existence of future generations. But that is a problem for them to solve. Build more nuclear power stations; develop more plutonium, the most deadly substance known to man. This may mean a dead planet sooner or later. But why worry? We shall all be dead by then in any case. As Seithenyn, guardian of the dike, says in *The Misfortunes of Elphin*: 'It was half rotten when I was born, and that is a conclusive reason why it should be three parts rotten when I die. Cupbearer, fill.'

☐ The inexorable creation of new roads is another example of how we sacrifice the future for the sake of immediate advantages, themselves contestable. Hardened as I am to perversities, even I was startled by C. H. Sharp's article on road policy in the NEW STATESMAN a couple of weeks ago. Its argument was simple: road transport is the cheapest way of moving goods, therefore everything must go down before it. Tear down historic buildings; pollute the cities; ruin the countryside; accept the killing of old people and children as the price of progress. We shake our heads at the way Victorians put wealth before welfare, but their crimes were nothing to ours. The gallant few who resist this policy have to pay for their resistance out of their own pockets. Opponents of the proposed motorway at Winchester have already had to find £30,000 and their money is running out, while the resources of the road lobby are inexhaustible even when the Government does not itself pay for the promotion of pollution. Railways cause no pollution; they are a delight to travel on; they have elaborate safety precautions. The sensible moral would be to build more railways and reduce the number of roads. We do the exact opposite. No matter that we are destroying civilised life throughout the country as long as it is cheaper. Cupbearer, fill.

☐ I vaguely remember a campaign for the Common Market, an institution that now provides Roy Jenkins with a no doubt well-earned salary of £60,000 a year tax free. We were told that the Common Market would make us better off and get rid of unemployment. From the moment we joined the Common Market prices went up and unemployment increased. The main increase has been in food prices and these are expected to rise faster than ever within the Common Market. This is happening at a time when world prices for food and raw materials have stabilised and are even coming down. The Common Market was expressly designed to safeguard inefficient French peasants, and the British housewife carries the burden of them. When we were in the Commonwealth and not in the Common Market food was cheap. Now that we have no Commonwealth and are in the Common Market food is dear. The United States pay world prices and as a result inflation there has virtually come to a halt. We, too, could be almost clear of inflation if we were not in the Common Market and its opponents said that at the time of the referendum. They have been proved right but no one, it seems, takes any notice. Our rulers, once embarked on the wrong course, are determined to keep to it. I suspect that Great Britain will remain a loyal member of the Common Market when it has collapsed everywhere else.

☐ When I was a young lecturer history stopped in 1914. At Oxford it still stops at 1939 and even I did not venture beyond 1945. In my last lecture at Bristol I entered an unknown world and went on to the present day. I was astonished at what I found. There have of course been great follies, nuclear and otherwise. But the last 30 years, surveyed in detachment, have been a wonderful period. There have been no wars in Europe and, even better, there is no war in sight, except for the professional warriors flourishing their rusty weapons. Germany is now a peaceful country. The German problem has vanished, thanks to partition – a happy and, it seems, a permanent solution that no one thought of beforehand. All the European empires have gone and all the attempts at imperialistic aggression from Suez to Vietnam have failed. Despite a few exceptions of which South Africa is the worst, there are fewer people under alien rule than at any time in the world's history. The greatest achievement in my opinion has been the return of China to her ancient position as the wisest of all civilized communities. Perhaps Bernard Shaw's prophecy in *Back to Methuselah* will be fulfilled and the Chinese will take over the running of the entire world. But I fear they are too sensible to try.

☐ Last Sunday the weather did not encourage me to go out into the country so I went to the new Museum of London in the Barbican instead. The museum is certainly a splendid place for children. There are mysterious passages and dark corners where they can play hide-and-seek. There are also wonderful things for adults to see, ranging from a rich collection of Roman remains to a rather unconvincing figure of George Robey. I have also grumbles. Just as architects never think of readers when they design a library, so here they thought of everything except visitors. The entrance is up narrow concrete steps which are difficult for prams and for elderly people less agile than I am. When the museum is full of visitors the atmosphere becomes oppressive and there seems to be no air conditioning. There are long descriptive labels on every show-case, often at floor level, so that you have to kneel down if you want to read them. They are no doubt admirable for children but nowadays children, I am told, cannot read. The old-style museums, displaying rows of miscellaneous objects, are now rightly discarded. The Museum of London, I think, has gone too far in the other direction. There are too many imaginary pictures of what London looked like in Roman times or in the middle ages, and not enough real relics. On the whole I prefer the Folk Museum in the former debtors' prison at York. However I am ready to be converted. I shall go again to the Museum of London when it is less crowded and shall spend the whole time crawling round on my hands and knees.

☐ Life is full of surprises. I thought that blasphemy had long ceased to exist as a legal offence. Mrs Whitehouse has proved me wrong. She has raised this obsolete charge. The last conviction was some 30 years ago when a speaker in Hyde Park was sent to prison for entertaining his audience on the subject of the Lamb of God and mint sauce. Mrs Whitehouse's accusation seems to me worse than blasphemous; it is heresy. The fundamental doctrine, accepted by all Christians, is that Jesus Christ was wholly both God and Man. He had all the human characteristics, including sexuality. It is of course possible to combine sexual powers and impeccable virtue as Jesus Christ may well have done. On this there is no evidence one way or the other. But it is certain that he was subject to temptation and anyone who denies this is guilty of grievous heresy. I must look up the name for it in Gibbon.

A. J. P. Taylor

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ A rise of 14 per cent in deaths and serious injuries on Devon and Cornwall roads was blamed by police chiefs on the slow reactions of elderly pedestrians. – *Plymouth Sunday Independent* (C. F. Hamsen)

☐ 'We were able to use the dining room for chamber music concerts. The first was a most unlikely occasion. The Amadeus Quartet played the Haydn Quartet Opus 76 No 1 in G major and the Schubert Quartet in A minor to celebrate the first issue of a new Central Statistical office publication, *Social Trends*.' – *Sunday Times* (J. C. Katzenellenbogen)

☐ But in his archdeaconry none of his labour was in vain. . . . He and his Bentley modified many a curve in Northampton lanes, and between him and the gateposts there was little hid that was not made manifest. – *The Times* (A. Carter)

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HOW DO WE SORT THIS OUT?

"basically National Socialism and Marxism are the same"

Adolf Hitler in a public speech in February 1941

(References) Professor Eduard Heimann, *Social Research* (New York) vol. VII, no. 4, November 1941; the *Bulletin of International News* published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, vol. XVIII, no. 5, p. 269; and F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom.*

"But never since the earliest days of the Labour movement has Marxism itself been regarded as a disqualification"

Anthony Wedgwood Benn. December 10, 1976

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University Forum

Martin Staniland*

Outside the Whale

So one Monday I just came back from lunch and wrote out my resignation. Otherwise, there was nothing special about the day. Across in the refectory the students were throwing paper darts at each other as usual; in the social science building the lift was out of service again; and the pub. admin. boys down the corridor were scuttling in and out of their rooms as always, coordinating busily, wagging their clipboards, and chalking notices to themselves on their blackboards.

The eccentric Danish composer, Charles Henry Valentin Alkan, had an influence on the decision, by the sad, but apt manner of his death, which kept on edging into my mind during departmental meetings and seminars. Alkan, the writer (or possibly engineer) of numerous heroic if prolonged symphonic works, was crushed to death by his, no doubt, over-laden bookcase, which fell on top of him as he was reaching up for a tome.

Presumably many academics in their thirties encounter *memento mori* of this characteristically whimsical kind. The 'mid-life' crisis, the psychologists upstairs assure me, is universal. But is there anything particular about academic life now, or the state of the social sciences, which might explain the air of gorged boredom which seems to have settled over the system-built monuments to Robbins littering the campuses?

Discounting for age, repetition, and so on, I and a variety of colleagues seem to share a strong unease about the triviality and shallowness of much contemporary social science. Pursuing its source we keep on clutching at one word, the key to the curse: professionalism. It was especially seductive to those, like myself, who rode the tide of expansion into the anchorages of tenure during the Sixties and that for two reasons. One was that my generation was the first in this country since 1900 which could realistically envisage a continuous career from school upwards to whatever level the Peter Principle might carry us. The other was that jobs and research funds were abundant (in the mid-Sixties, according to Messrs Halsey and Trow, 'social studies teachers increased by 155 per cent compared with 46.5 per cent for university staff as a whole'). Such abundance facilitated (there goes one of our words) the creation of pedagogic bureaucracies and research empires. Growth, in demand and in status, of itself seemed to vindicate the case of the principal entrepreneurs in social sciences – that a sophisticated neutrality on questions of value, plus greater attention to rigorous measurement, would attract at last the recognition of social scientists as a profession.

An interesting question, which I've never heard discussed, concerns the relationship between the expansion of the social science empires in the Sixties and current assumptions about growth and affluence. If, as I suspect, the days of the social science paradigm are numbered, it is here that the historians of ideas will have to dig: it was here that the ground shifted, imperceptibly perhaps, in the early Seventies. Before then it made sense in the social science world to talk about 'rolling back the frontiers of knowledge' when you could rely on the wagon-trains arriving on time; when the Indians were pretty dormant (or even co-operative); and, not least, when you had a general sense that you were moving anyway.

But where do you sell out when nobody's buying any more? Consider the prospects viewed from the mid-Seventies: stagnation in finance and staffing; minimal mobility and promotion; libraries, travel, equipment, all cut back; student numbers flattening out or falling (especially in post-graduate work). Yet none of these things would matter that much – indeed, they might help – if the spirit of the enterprise was sound. But, unfortunately, that is exactly where the worst problem is to be found. Having demystified, demolished, and relativised everything in sight, the masters of methodology find themselves stuck out in a metaphysical wilderness made by their own hands.

The typical social science department now has a youngish professor of the breed so well satirised by Malcolm Bradbury in *The History Man*, surrounded by an ageing, immobile, and generally disrespectful staff. Many such departmental heads rose in the Sixties by their skill as trend-spotters and project-mongers (as, to be fair, did many of their junior colleagues): few would fill a lecture theatre for their intellectual distinction or philosophical identification alone, or at all. In some instances, they and their colleagues may be condemned to each other's company for 30 more years, to be spent, presumably, in sprinkling over successive generations of students that peculiar philosophical detergent-cum-defoliant concocted (or marketed) in the name of hard-nosed science during expansion. Sprayed by an experienced operator from a suitable height, this fluid will disperse with remarkable speed any embarrassing political, moral, or metaphysical issue which floats up uninvited in seminar or staff meeting, breaking it down into puddles of appropriate triviality for pumping into handy analytic tanks, safely identified with and assimilated to 'areas of the literature'. Thus, in comparative politics – a branch of social science which in tone often resembles natural history – there are no atrocities, only 'case-studies'; no moral dilemmas, just 'policy-options'; and nobody believes anything, they merely 'articulate ideologies' and 'assert priorities'.

Dachau and Treblinka are, I gather, mainly interesting illustrations of deference as a theme in German political culture. These days, the owl of Minerva doesn't fly only at dusk: she generally flies on established flight-paths, under radar height, and usually just to conferences. She lives in a barn owned by the Social Science Research Council and eats grass. She recognises the ongoing professional concerns of mice, rats, and all suitably qualified predators, while interacting on a continuing basis with key multi-disciplinary resource agencies in such burgeoning problem-areas as rook semiotics and vole phenomenology.

The trouble with this small furry world is that it fosters a sense of small furriness in all who are in contact with it. By their second year, many social science students seem to have assembled within their over-literal minds an extraordinarily domineering cast of meta-persons, prominent among them 'Society', 'the System', 'the Political Structure', and 'Capitalism', all of whom plus many others are for ever demanding, disapproving, expecting, constraining, conditioning, structuring, determining, censoring, exploiting, blocking, indoctrinating, and a whole host of other depressingly un-life-enhancing things. 'Society', in particular, is constantly on the job, and has his agents everywhere: he does nothing by halves, but always 'basically', 'ultimately', 'massively', and 'systematically'. The outcome is a curiously self-deprecating view of individual capacity, a sense of being caged in remote, awesome, and purposive structures. Surely social scientists, functionalist or Marxist, must take some blame for this phenomenon. As Paul Wilding has recently said:

> Because social science conditions us to think in terms of forces and movements, we devalue the contribution of individuals to social life and social change. If individuals are unimportant, if the economic and social system shape and determine everything else, then idealism and humanitarianism are words which have no place in the vocabulary of social science.

Like I said, just 'ideology'. But you could turn the machine round on itself and see social science not just as a collection of smartass methodological devices, but more as a cultural statement in its own right. In which case, God help us all.

And, indeed, to end on a note of redemption, I have discovered by chance that there is actually a social scientist called Christ (Adolph E. Christ). His field – you guessed it – is religious affiliation and attitudes to mortality. Death, in short. Now, there's an inexplicably neglected area of research. I was wondering if I could get somebody for a little project, nothing ambitious, a sky-pilot project if you like, with, let's say, a sample panel of geriatric sociologists, that's right, we interview them to get them feeling a bit, er, insecure – and then we dress up a research assistant, well, sort of like Santa Claus, only more severe kind of thing and with a halo, of course, and then one night . . . But I'm not telling till I get the grant: it's a professional secret.

University Forum will resume in our issue of 14 January. Contributions, from students or faculty, should be sent to the Editor and marked accordingly.

** Martin Staniland gave up a lectureship at the University of Glasgow last summer.*

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

A Good Read

Some Hull schoolchildren, examined recently on their knowledge of the last war and of Hitler, replied that he had a toothbrush moustache, made a lot of rather loud speeches and invented a political party called the Nancies. Well, yes and no. The Hull pupils did, in my view, rather well. In similar circumstances some 60 years ago one would oneself have fared a bit ignominiously. I knew, of course, about the Kaiser, all bristles and ferocity, who was going to hang everybody from lamp-posts. Then there were those remarkable Bernard Partridge cartoons in *Punch*, a weekly treat which often depicted, against a shell-torn background, poor Peace, with the back of one hand across her eyes to shut out the horrid sights and sheltering plucky little Belgium in the folds of her robe, while in the foreground was to be seen a sturdy, female France, wearing a Napoleonic hat and apron and sensible clogs, holding out a grateful hand across the channel to a prosperous-looking John Bull and saying something like '*Merci, mon brave!*'. A likely story. Further wartime information of a highly-coloured and doubtfully reliable kind came to me from a popular sort of fiction for boys, the rattling good yarns of Percy F. Westerman, author of *A Lively Bit of the Front*. From them one discovered that when not actually at the Front and in uniform, all German men were in England and imperfectly disguised as spies (you could tell them from their 'shuffling gait'), were apt to mutter '*Himmel!*' and '*Donnerwetter!*' when under pressure and were invariably unkind to animals, especially dogs. Could Hunnish conduct go further?

Mr Westerman's rattling yarns appeared in the *Boy's Own Paper* (always known to its readers as the *B.O.P.*), a monthly magazine with an entirely wholesome tone (it was published under the wing of the Religious Tract Society) and chock-a-block with useful information on varied subjects. One learnt 'How to apply for a position as a lighthousekeeper', 'How to boil water in a paper bag', 'How to make an electric trumpet', 'What to do with addled hawks' eggs', 'How to catch ostriches' (put on an ostrich feather hood and so 'hoodwink' them, ha ha), 'How to stuff reptiles', 'How to make birdlime' (boil mistletoe berries to destruction) and 'How to keep spiders as pets'. There was a stirring article on 'How I swam the channel' by Captain Webb ('I rubbed myself all over with porpoise oil, dived in and struck out for Cape Gris Nez'), the gallant captain getting sharply stung by jellyfish (French ones, doubtless) and wading ashore to the strains of *Rule Britannia*. Though there was no article actually called 'How not to get into bad habits', the fear of you-know-what was everywhere expressed in feverish editorials. Take cold baths, sleep on a hard mattress, fling wide the windows, exercise vigorously with dumb-bells, turn in dog-tired, eat sparingly ('Fat makes duffers') and, if 'troubled' by sexual thoughts, on no account visit an art gallery. With a final warning about noses falling off, blindness, nervous twitches, insanity, the mad-house and suicide, we could pass on to less fussing matters such as what to do for the best with chilblains, bunions and blackheads.

We owe all these delightful facts to a senior lecturer at Sandhurst, Philip Warner, who, enthusiastically burrowing about in the back numbers, has produced, in *The Best of British Pluck* (Macdonald and Jane's sell it at £5.95) a splendid selection of *B.O.P.* articles, stories and illustrations from the 88 years of its life, and a perceptive and admiring introduction (and a sense of humour) to go with it.

But despite all the care and attention lavished on the readers, the 'Answers to Correspondents' usually finds the editor in a somewhat crisp mood. 'No one with your handwriting could hope to get a job in a bank' is hardly encouraging. 'Spots on the forehead' is told 'Your blood is impure. Do you study to keep holy in thought by day?' A keen apiarist gets a rap over the knuckles ('How do you expect us to name a bumble bee which has been squashed flat in the post?'). Though some readers are, as usual, more equal than others ('Glandular scars will prevent you from being accepted for the Marines unless as an officer'), the editor's intention, when the magazine first began as a weekly in 1879, was to appeal to all classes, and he sold it at the accessible price of 1d. It was perfectly normal to find a school article on Winchester alongside a description, fully illustrated, of the new Working Lads Institute in Whitechapel, or an account of an exciting mutiny at Eton (they threw eggs at the Provost) cheek by jowl with life on the Humber Training Ship at Southampton. Indeed, working lads were a prime consideration and, after Dr W. G. Grace has given some brisk hints on cricket ('Hold the bat firmly and don't twirl it about') and we have gazed at snaps of whiskery boat race crews, the lads are reminded of the perils of gin palaces and music halls ('the dancing is disgusting') and of other dangers (hard mattresses again) and are told that the fact that they have to be at the factory gates at 6 a.m. is no excuse for skipping cold baths.

In the *B.O.P.* there was, for some tastes, rather too much emphasis on physical punishments in general and beating in particular. There are articles such as 'Under the Rod' and 'Swishing Anecdotes' from the fertile pen of 'Cuthbert Bede', an *alias* of the Rev. E. E. Bradford, the supremely wonky Lincolnshire poet, responsible for an unforgettable volume called *Passing the Love of Women*. Elsewhere we find 'Famous Floggers' (who was the headmaster who absent-mindedly caned six boys waiting outside his study, forgetting that they were intending confirmands who had come to hear him discourse on 'The meaning of the spirit'?). The description of the assembling, twig by twig, of a birch leads one to suspect that there was somebody in the editorial office who had a problem.

Most important of all and wonderfully good were the serialised adventure stories, and in choosing their authors (among them, Jules Verne, Henty, Conan Doyle, Algernon Blackwood) the editors knew their business. How thrilling it used to be, reading away safe and snug and warm in bed, to be marooned on an ice floe, to come face to face with a Bengal tiger, to struggle with the sharks of Mauritius, or to fall off a cliff locked in a grizzly's hairy embrace, its hot breath on one's face and its great slavering jaws (see illustration) an inch from one's nose.

This Indonesia

☐ A new computer-operated traffic control scheme starts here next month and if motorists ignore the rules the police will stone their vehicles. 'If necessary all traffic policemen in Jakarta will be instructed to carry stones so that they can throw them at vehicles which ignore the rules', the city governor said. – *The Times* (Chris McSheehy)

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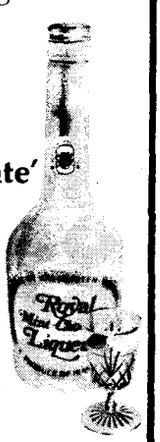

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Letters to the Editor

Universities and Engineers

Sir, I must take issue with Peter Wilby's views on engineering education (NS 3 December). Although our engineering departments would welcome more students of higher ability – who would not? – his condemnation of our current intake is far too sweeping. Using the figures presented by Mr Wilby himself in a recent *Sunday Times* article (25 September), different disciplines can be arranged into a league-table according to the quality of their entrants. Chemical engineering comes a respectable fourth in the table with a score of 34, behind medicine (47), maths (36) and classics (35). It thus scores higher than any pure science, narrowly beating physics (32) and trouncing chemistry (22), biochemistry (16), geology (14) and zoology (8). Our undergraduates, then, are no fools. What of their training?

Certainly in my own department – and we are not alone – we do not impose an 'academic orientation' on our syllabus. We do teach an intellectually demanding course whose purpose is to equip the student to understand and solve the problems of design and management in a science-based industry which spends vast sums on employing technology on the grand scale. The success of the British chemical industry, and the alacrity with which its major employers return to recruit more of our graduates, suggest that our methods are justified and dispel any fear that our students have learned to disdain dirty hands. Admittedly we might gain by adopting some practices from the Continental engineering schools, commended to us by Mr Wilby, but he should recall that their courses last six years or more, ours only three or four, and that they offer much higher salaries than us, making it possible for them to hire staff with substantial industrial experience, an option which, contrary to one of Mr Wilby's remarks, is not generally open to us.

It behoves us to inquire as to the sources of the strange belief that the courses in our long-established universities are on the whole unduly impractical. That it should be held by eminent politicians and senior civil servants is no surprise since they often either didn't attend university or read arts at Oxford a generation or more ago and may thus be presumed to understand little about engineering at Cambridge, Edinburgh, London, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and so on and, less forgivably, not to know that they understand very little. That it is entertained by some men in the polys and the technological universities for honest reasons is in no doubt, but I fear too that some such men preach that doctrine not from conviction but for advantage – they wish to divert the flow of funds and students to their own institutions. They have had some success. But that this odd notion gains assent from some industrialists who ought to know better needs some deeper explanation. Is it, as I suspect, that the egos of some men benefit from their contrasting the virility required, the machismo exhibited (if that's what one does with machismo) to cope with the demands of industrial life, with the effete softness of the dwellers in the ivory towers? And does a natural progression then lead them to an inevitable attack on universities as purveyors of an education which is too 'theoretical', too divorced from the 'nitty-gritty'? Or is it, as a colleague has it, that such men, who often work under great stress, need to believe that somewhere there is a life simple and pure, unsullied with disagreeable realities, and that they project their cherished image on to the universities, much as townsmen may treasure an absurdly rosy picture of rural life?

Whatever the origins of the belief, the ease with which many of our graduates find jobs abroad and the numbers in which foreign students enrol for our courses show that, for all our vices, real or imagined, the causes of the low esteem in which engineering is held are not to be found in the universities. For Mr Wilby is, of course, quite right in his primary contention: Britain sadly underrates engineering and pays dearly for this folly. Blame history.

W. R. PATERSON

Department of Chemical Engineering
University of Edinburgh

A JP's Duty Not a Happy One

Sir, As a prosecuting solicitor in magistrates' courts, may I comment on Geoff Robertson's article 'Labour Challenges the Jury' (NS 10 December)? I wholly agree with the main theme of the article – that 'public order' offences should carry a right of jury trial for the few defendants who now choose it. These are offences not only closely connected with individual liberty but, particularly with assault on police, ones that rely on police evidence to be proved – not always the case with, for example, theft. Since 90 per cent or more of all criminal cases are already tried by magistrates, even where jury trial is available, it would be perverse to remove the right in such cases.

However the article contains factual assertions about courts which are difficult to justify. All generalisations about the criminal process are risky and should be supported where possible with statistical proof. The writer may have proof of his statement that it is no good appealing against a conviction by magistrates to a judge and magistrates in the Crown Courts who 'strain to uphold the decision of their brethren'. Can he show that such appeals usually fail, and can this inference be fairly drawn?

Similarly, I doubt the statement that one of the drawbacks of trial by magistrate is the slow pace of examination of witnesses because the evidence is being taken down in shorthand. It is the exception rather than the rule for a lay magistrates' court to take any notes of evidence for record purposes, and the pace of such trials is much brisker than in Crown Courts, which are in slow motion because the judge is taking down every word in longhand, resulting in delay and considerable cost to the legal aid fund. It may be that justice should be done slowly, but this is not the case before magistrates.

JESSICA HOLROYD

11 Freeman Close
Milton Keynes

Sir, I congratulate Geoff Robertson on his article 'Labour Challenges the Jury' but fear I cannot agree with all of his opinions.

Certainly his criticism of the lay justices is largely justified. In order to be a JP one has to be prepared to give up about one working day in each week and spend that day in court. The JPs are not paid for this lost day; hence this means it is only middle-aged, middle-class people who can afford to serve as JPs. What is not appreciated by the general public is that *some* JPs, unfortunately a small minority at the present time, have got legal training. Maybe it would be possible to increase this number in some way.

However, I am unable to agree with his condemnation of the stipendiary magistrates, who, in the words of Mr Robertson, are all ageing lawyers. I do not purport to know the average age of the stipendiaries, but feel justified in saying that not all of them are ageing. Those of them who could be said to be ageing physically are, for the most part, still very alert mentally, and have a wide knowledge and experience of the law. Neither would I say that they are out of touch with the real world. Mr Robertson also implies that the jury system is all-virtuous, which could be because the rate of acquittal is higher in jury trials. The reason for this is that the jurors, having no knowledge of the law, are all too easily tricked and influenced by skilful defending counsel. In addition to this, personal prejudices must inevitably influence the jury. Having said this I would add that I stand firmly with Mr Robertson in his criticism of the Criminal Law Bill, and the other points he raises.

T. M. DABER

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112 Great Russell Street
London WC1

Propaganda and Reality

Sir, Mr G. V. Shukla of the Indian High Commission in his letter published in your issue of 19 November has repeated the Indian Home Affairs Minister's 'lie' (to borrow Mr Shukla's polite expression) about the number of political prisoners held without trial or chargesheet. The *National Herald* of Lucknow, a newspaper founded by the former Prime Minister, Mr Nehru, had in its issue of 18 August 1976 published an official account of the number of prisoners in the State of Uttar Pradesh. According to it, 'since the imposition of emergency the UP Government has arrested 34,557 persons in the State for economic and *other* offences. Economic offenders arrested under the D.I.R. (Defence of India Rules), M.I.S.A. (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) and the Essential Commodities Act numbered 2,616. The remaining were anti-social elements.'

For the propagandists of the Indian regime, just as unpalatable facts are lies, political dissidents are anti-social elements. Their number in UP alone was admitted to be 31,941. If, as claimed by Mr Shukla, there are only about 12,000 political prisoners in the whole of India how can the figure for UP be more than 30,000. Against this background, I am ashamed that the editor of a respected Indian daily like *Mathrubhoomi* has hurled abuse at the NEW STATESMAN instead of trying to answer criticism levelled by you at the Indian Government. Newspaper editors like him have so demeaned their profession that the press in India has lost all credibility. A graphic instance was the recent rioting in the capital city of Delhi when a campaign to vaccinate school children was misinterpreted by the public as a drive to sterilise boys and girls. Irate parents would not believe what was reported in the newspapers. Worse still, when rumours of deaths due to vaccination were not reported, people took it as confirmation because since the emergency nothing considered inimical to the rulers was being allowed to be published.

A. B. MATHUR

Lucknow
India

A Visitation from the Lord

Sir, While I was interested in your profile of Richard Ingrams (NS 3 December), since it provided some clues to the controversial character that he has become, I have somewhat less admiration than the writer for Ingrams's 'bravado', as illustrated by his quoted comment that 'the worst thing about going to prison would be the constant visits from Lord Longford'.

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This may be a witticism, but it is unkind and unfair to a man for whose goodness and sincerity I have much admiration. I have frequently disagreed with Lord Longford in public and in private on the subject of pornography on which we have different views, but he has given much help to people in prison for many years, and has done this because he cares about the outcasts of society as few others care. If Richard Ingrams should eventually go to prison as a result of his difficulties with Sir James Goldsmith he might even welcome visits from such an interesting and intelligent man.

In *De Profundis* Oscar Wilde wrote:

> But we who live in prison, and in whose lives there is no event but sorrow, have to measure time by throbs of pain, and the record of bitter moments. We have nothing else to think of. Suffering – curious as it may sound to you – is the means by which we exist, because it is the only means by which we become conscious of existing.

In this things have not changed much, if at all, in the present century, and any contact that a prisoner has with someone from the outside world who seems to care is at least a temporary alleviation which helps to make life in prison a little more endurable.

JOHN TREVELYAN

8 Rockwells Gardens
London SE19

South Bank Wallah

Sir, There was once a Minister of the Arts hight Hugh Jenkins. If a reason be sought for the past tense one need look no further than the extraordinary letter penned to you by the late lamented commissar (NS 10 December). Or can it be a spoof from some evil-minded impersonator? To suggest that those who, with reason, criticise aspects of the National Theatre and the disparities in government financing of the arts, are narrow-minded philistines bent upon diverting funds to Concorde, bingo, the Sex Pistols etc. is about as puerile as one can get.

Let's get it straight. None of the National's critics begrudge it its *succès fou*. They do, however, worry that, at a time of acute financial stringency when money for the arts is being savagely cut back in real terms, there are grave dangers that, in channelling disproportionate sums to the South Bank, other equally meritorious sectors such as regional theatre (which Mr Jenkins mentions in sarcastic vein), PLR and the experimental arts world, will inevitably be impoverished and stricken down. If to say this is 'carping' I, for one, am happy to be carpeted!

BENEDICT BIRNBERG

4 Eliot Place
London SE5

Bragg's Own Weekly

Sir, It is most thoughtful of Ian Hamilton (NS 3 December) to tell the NEW STATESMAN readers that *Read All About It* can be watched 'with an indulgent sneer'. But his desire to be helpful does not excuse him from the burden of accurate reporting and fair representation. The 'two minutes or so' available for Ian McEwan were in fact nine minutes. 'Fatuous questions' about the 'unpleasantness' of McEwan's subject matter? Paul Johnson, Juliet Mitchell and Marina Warner did indeed talk to Ian McEwan about the content of his stories. Nothing fatuous about that. Moreover to Hamilton's modish little jibe that 'what is said on it is froth' I would reply by asserting that the NEW STATESMAN could happily print a transcript of that discussion without at all demeaning itself.

Read All About It has of course its limitations and it can be improved. I hope it will be. What is depressing about Hamilton's careless contribution is that it is not serious. I am editing a television talk programme and not the NEW STATESMAN or the *New Review*. A surprising number of the same people contribute to all three – and they do so knowing that it is possible to approach books in different ways and still retain one's integrity.

Since the arrival of radio, television and of numerous magazines which do not fit into the old mould, the literary world has become more varied, and I would say more interesting than Hamilton will allow. After all, *Time Out* was the first English magazine to publish Ian McEwan. He frequently writes for *Radio Times*. He also contributes to the *New Review*. Hamilton's failing is that he will not address himself to anything outside his own enclosed world. The *New Review* deserves more than a sneer: so does *Read All About It*.

MELVYN BRAGG

9 Gayton Road
London NW3

Vorster's Other Whites

Sir, Graham Paterson (NS 3 December) is, of course, right when he says a large part of Vorster's support comes from the 'poor whites' and due to their economic fears this is a vote he will never lose. What is not generally known is the historical origin of the Nationalist Party. It goes back to an almost forgotten episode in Labour history – the Rand Revolt of 1922.

Then the Johannesburg Chamber of Mines threatened a reduction of wages in the mines and if this was not agreed threatened to bring in black African labour. An armed insurrection ensued, led largely by emigrant Welsh miners; 230 people were killed by the time it was suppressed by the military forces by Botha and Smuts. The slogan of the miners was 'Workers of the World fight and unite for a White South Africa'. It was on the ashes of this revolt that Malan and Verwoerd rose to power.

J. M. RAMPTON

Easton Lodge
Easton, nr Norwich

Teaching Hospitals

Sir, Donald Gould (NS 3 December) is confused. Preventive medicine was 100 years ago. Pasteur, Koch and Semmelweiss are not the names of the promising young doctors of 1977. The crippling and killing diseases today are coronary artery disease, bronchitis and lung cancer. Mr Ennals, Dr Gould and I all know how they can be prevented – and you do not need to pull down Bart's and Tommy's to do it. All you need is to stop people smoking.

The London teaching hospitals are far from perfect but they do turn out very good doctors. Unless we are content to place the health of the nation in the hands of graduates from Lahore and Bombay (who are much more urgently needed at home in any case), we would do well to ensure that other teaching hospitals can increase their output of doctors before we cripple those in London. As for transferring the care of the sick from hospitals to the community, this is a fine idea if they have an adequate home, loving relations or enough money to pay for their care. It is not so clever if you are over 80 and live alone. Our social ills will not be cured by butchering the hospital service.

MARTIN LOWY
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Royal Northern Hospital
London N7

The Metropolitan Poet

Sir, If you can still find space for pedantic metropolitan criticism of Clive James's jolly-swagman doggerel, may I draw attention to an even graver solecism than the prosodic heterodoxies pointed out hitherto? On p.34 of *Britannia Bright's Bewilderment* 'hapax logomenon' should as every schoolboy knows read 'hapax legomenon'. I am sure that 'Enoch Eunuch' – to whom of all unlikely persons this lower-fourth blunder is attributed – must have blanched if he read it.

JACK DIXON

Greenbriar Cottage
Cowper Road
River-in-Dover, Kent

Showing the Flag

Sir, I am surprised at Jeremy Bentham's elementary mistake over the crime (if any) committed by Lady Godiva ('Kerb Crawling and the Sexes', NS 10 December). Under the statute current in England and Wales at present (S.4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824) indecent exposure can only be committed by a man 'with intent to insult any female'. Scotland, however, is more progressive; and S.380 (1) of the Burgh Police (Scotland) Act 1892 gives both sexes equal opportunity to expose themselves and be penalised for it.

SEBASTIAN ROBINSON

22 Athole Gardens
Glasgow G12

Unabashed

Sir, Mary Whitehouse's prosecution of *Gay News* for blasphemous libel may be successful, but it will not be effective. James Kirkup's poem 'The Love That Dares To Speak Its Name' has been available since it appeared in that excellent paper last June, and it has now been reprinted without the permission of the author or the publisher. I shall be glad to send a copy to anyone who sends me a stamped addressed envelope.

NICOLAS WALTER

134 Northumberland Road
Harrow, Middlesex

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Spectator (6.11.76)

The January issue, for instance, out on December 20th, contains the following outstanding contributions: **Andrew Shonfield** asking *Can Capitalism Survive till 1999?* **H. J. Eysenck** on *The Case of Cyril Burt*. **Renee Winegarten** on George Sand and **Marcel Reich-Ranicki** on Thomas Mann. **Eugène Ionesco** on *Abuses of Language*. A story by Gillian Tindall. *Labour in Disarray* by **John Mackintosh**. And a special book section on Politics & World Affairs with reviews by **Donald Watt, Lucy Mair, Ferdinand Mount** and **Anthony Hartley.**

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

David Caute

What's Your Problem?

The Socialist Register of 1976 edited by Ralph Miliband and John Saville *Merlin Press* £5.00 and £2.50

This year's edition of *The Socialist Register* is a disappointing compilation. No attempt has been made to confront at a serious theoretical level any of the basic dilemmas confronting democratic socialism: how liberty and equality can be reconciled in practice; the choice between equity and equality; the conflict between the positive and negative concepts of liberty; the choice between violent and evolutionary change; the role of class consciousness within total consciousness; and the necessary institutional theory in the absence of which we merely stumble blindly forward, 'nationalising' failing industries and hastily placing them under the management of displaced champions of free enterprise.

One can go further. These basic dilemmas make little sense if jotted down like items on a laundry list. The central problematic binding them together, and bringing thought and action into a coherent relationship, can be discovered only within a general theoretical model of historical behaviour: as Marx recognised. It is only by burrowing into the much-mauled intestines of Marx's philosophy that we discover why democratic socialists have so far failed to achieve socialism, and why Leninist socialists have so far failed to achieve democracy – and therefore, of course, socialism. A large proportion of the new *Socialist Register* buzzes around the petals of the flower, while cautiously veering away from the poisoned nectar within.

According to Marx, the root cause of human conflict, alienation and false consciousness resides in the prevailing capitalist mode of production whereby the worker is forced to sell his labour power as a commodity, receives in return only the subsistence wages required to keep him ticking over as a source of surplus value, suffers from increasing pauperisation as the crisis of capitalism develops, and generally leads a degraded existence. To my mind there is more truth than error in this scenario; failure to recognise the truth of it is the fatal flaw of modern social democrats; failure to identify the significant margin of error has led Marxist revolutionaries into those famous 'excesses' which are afterwards mumbled away as 'abuses of socialist legality' and other *Quatsch*.

The one (out of ten) articles contained in *The Socialist Register 1976* which adopts a theoretical approach, 'Controversial Issues in Marxist Economic Theory', by Ben Fine and Laurence Harris, does have the virtue of re-examining some of Marx's basic economic axioms, though I am unconvinced by their conclusions. The significant element of error at the heart of Marx springs neither from his rigid notion of value nor from his prognosis of total capitalist crisis; it springs from his failure to conceive of historic man as more than an economic animal, his failure to understand that the division of labour explains only one facet of human alienation and 'anti-social' behaviour. In this respect Marx was dominated by that most perennial of radical illusions, that if man is a social animal, his vices must be explained exclusively in terms of transitory social deformations.

In other words, there is a significant gap in Marx: it is in that gap that reside the Party, the guillotine and the Gulag Archipelago. At this point I begin to stumble: are the millions of little Stalins who have made 'socialism' the enemy, rather than the fulfilment, of humanism to be explained in terms of primal human aggression, or of alienation within the family unit, or of institutional calamities such as the one-party system and the unification of executive, legislative, administrative and judicial powers? Paradoxically, this last explanation, while the least convincing (because institutions are only what men make of them) provides us with the only sphere in which socio-political action is immediately practicable. And this, as Ken Coates recognises in his article, 'How Not to Reappraise the New Left', leads democratic socialists back to the old 'bourgeois' fetish of the separation of powers (a fetish to those Marxist minds which too readily dismissed it as relevant only to the capitalist-democratic state).

How readily and glibly such excuses were offered by the Western Communist Parties in the aftermath of Khrushchev's secret speech to the 20th Congress of the Soviet Party in February 1956, is documented in this book by four articles, three of which (by John Saville, Malcolm MacEwen and Margot Heinemann) are concerned with that minuscule excrescence, the British Communist Party. But haven't we read all about that long ago? And should not these authors, who were so traumatised by K's 'revelations', and who suddenly waxed so indignant about the dirty tricks of Pollitt, Palme Dutt, George Matthews and the King Street bureaucracy, have known it long before? In his 'Days of Tragedy and Farce', Mervyn Jones describes the twin events of Hungary and Suez with absolute lucidity and sureness of judgment – my only complaint is that I would like *The Socialist Register* to provoke discussion on the myths and illusions of socialists in 1976, and I cannot really believe that many of us now need convincing that Soviet tanks did not intervene to rescue Hungary from a fascist counter-revolution.

The gap in Marx's totality can be labelled 'the Party' – shorthand for a number of subsidiary questions concerning the nature, structure, class-basis and institutionalisation of authority in the socialist state. Bill Lomax's article on the workers' councils of Greater Budapest at the time of the Soviet invasion provokes thought about decentralisation and shop floor proletarian power, but the reader has to do the thinking since Lomax restricts himself to a historical description of events marked by an exceptional degree of fervour and nationalism – the real problem is the role of workers' councils within a synchronised and productive long-term socialist economy, in other words the conflict of democracy with productivity, of technical expertise with equality. Meanwhile Ken Coates opens another window on socialist democracy when he quotes from the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak CP in the Dubcek era, a plea, essentially, for the separation of powers which begged the question; *whose* powers? On balance, the essential notion of a plurality of parties competing for power by direct appeal to the electors came more to the fore during the ten days of the Hungarian Revolution than during the eight months of Dubcek's liberalisation.

The problem – if you like, the problem of the *Tribune* left – also taxes Ralph Miliband whose *Parliamentary Socialism* (1961) documented in unanswerable detail what had been widely, if vaguely, suspected – that once we send a good socialist to Westminster we may as well start looking for another good socialist, which is what I take those 'asset strippers' to be doing. Miliband thinks we should form a properly socialist party outside the Labour Party; I hope he will shamelessly devote next year's *Socialist Register* to a fundamental-theoretical discussion of its programme.

The last essay included in this volume should have been printed in *The Socialist Register* for 1896. 'Marxist Women versus Bourgeois Feminism', by Hal Draper and

D. J. Enright

Extremities

Look at the old, say the young,
They are thinking about Religion!

(Naturally the young die good;
At worst their overdraft is small.)

And true, it helps to be old:
God looks slightly likelier.

Not necessarily more likeable –
Which is not quite the point.

An undertaker, an obituary,
A wreath, seem insufficient.

In the end only the highest
Or the lowest counts for much.

In one's extremity,
Extremities.

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Anne G. Lipow, is about as irrelevant a contribution to the contemporary debate over feminism as it is possible to imagine. The basic thesis of the authors is that August Bebel and Clara Zetkin more or less got it right, and the modern women's movement has been getting it wrong. Said Zetkin: 'We have no special women's agitation to carry on but rather socialist agitation among women.' Again: 'Consequently, the liberation struggle of the proletarian woman cannot be – as it is for the bourgeois woman – a struggle against the men of her own class.'

It strikes me as little short of astonishing that, in the light of contemporary working-class experience, Draper and Lipow can endorse the old Marxist view that 'once one saw the female half of the human race as an integral part of the great social struggle, everything else followed'. Are the authors unfamiliar with the fact that proletarian women in Britain and Russia who work full-time commonly return home in the evening to begin a second round of labour while their brutish proletarian men put their feet up and watch the box? Are they unaware that in recent years women trade unionists in this country have made progress and achieved nominal equality of remuneration by organising themselves, often in the teeth of derision or hostility from their menfolk? And please don't tell me it's because the capitalist system induces in the male worker a fear of being undercut by working women: in that case, all the more reason for him to support equal pay.

Matthew Coady

Soldier's Tale

The Bells of Hell Go Ting-a-Ling-a-Ling
by ERIC HISCOCK *Arlington* £3.75

They 'don't send snotty-nosed little boys to the trenches', the sergeant said, but they did. Eric Hiscock, a gangling 15-year-old who lied about his age, was one. Now, more than half a century later, he exorcises the terrors of the 13 months he spent in France. Few more improbable figures than this former junior assistant in the Bodleian Library and Exeter College chorister could have shouldered arms to shatter the power of the Habsburgs. In the process, he saw things untouched on in sermon or psalm, let alone the Boer War drawings of R. Caton-Woodville from which his innocent notions of battle had been gleaned.

Mr Hiscock does more than add a volume to the library of disenchantment or offer yet another polemic against the stupidities of an incompetent High Command, a delayed cry of protest at the futility of the holocaust. Here is a personal, moving, often funny account of a boy soldier's war. In a sense it is *Journey's End* seen as a comedy, albeit a bitter one. The dashing captain reaches for the grog not because he is physically and spiritually drained by his devotion to the men and unable to face the tragedy of war. He does so because he is craven. The young lieutenant is spurred not by a shy, romantic hero-worship for his commanding officer, but by a thwarted homosexual itch for one of the troop. The survivors of the raid, when offered Military Medals or a hundred francs apiece, plump for the cash.

This is less the army of the staring-eyed Kitchener pointing an admonitory finger from the poster, than that of Fred Karno, the music hall impresario whose name gave the expeditionary force its self-mocking anthem. Perhaps it had to be, lest it became the legion of the deranged. For the unspeakable horrors were never far away. If you were lucky they were at least recognisable – like the screaming man without a jaw, or the disembodied leg performing a last sad service for King and Country by propping up a dugout – but not always. There is a moment when the young Hiscock, panting across the mud, topples into a pit to face an encounter designed to fuel the perspiring nightmares of a lifetime: 'I found myself straddling something soft which rose and fell beneath my struggles to get free.' A decaying horse was responding to the heels of its last rider by expelling the gases which had swollen its monstrous belly.

Most memoirs of that dreadful war, written in another era, assume that Tommy left not only his girl, but his sexuality behind him. Eric Hiscock, dreaming of Doris, the

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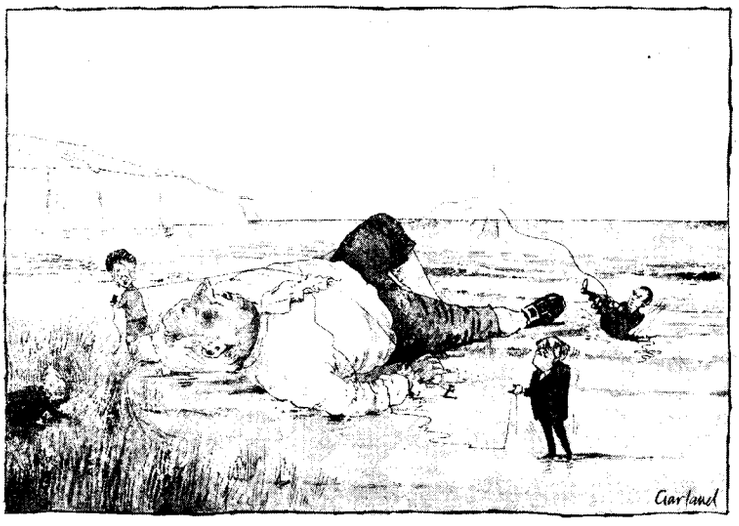

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Oxford shop assistant, trembling in the embrace of Maud, the field hospital nurse, bolting from Suzy, the diseased nymphomaniac, tells a different tale. Sex reared its withered neck even in the trenches. And nowhere more alarmingly than in the episode of his court martial. Here, he is falsely accused by an officer of deliberately wounding himself – an offence which could carry a sentence of death. The lieutenant's suspected motive, it emerged, was to break up a clutch of chums. 'He's a bugger, sir,' cried a defence witness who had seen the mud-caked gun misfire. 'He's been after one or two of us and he's very fond of Lance Corporal Hiscock's friend.' The charge was withdrawn and the young hero saved. It was his accuser who died – shortly afterwards in battle.

If this is a story of blood and barbed wire, it is also a valentine thrown to the past. If it remembers and mourns lost comrades it also conjures up a young manhood in a long-vanished provincial England. It evokes a world of teas at the Cadena with pig-tailed flappers, kisses in a hollow willow tree by the Cherwell and friendships that soothed the fears engendered where the rats stood a better chance than the human beings. Mr Hiscock survived Lord Kitchener's army to serve in Lord Beaverbrook's. Perils different from bullets or bayonets lay ahead. He has survived those, too.

Frances Yates

Revivalist

The Living Monument: Shakespeare and the Theatre of his Time by M. C. BRADBROOK *Cambridge* £8.50

The 'living monument' of Miss Bradbrook's title is explained by her as

> the English chronicle history which belonged to Shakespeare's days at the Theatre and remains its living monument; at the end of his life he returned to material recollected from his earlier acting days and refashioned it in his final romances.

She duly emphasises the fact that at the end of the century

> . . . the English history play suffered a sudden and almost total eclipse. It had been the main means of transferring to the Elizabethan stage that providential linking of past and present which enlarged the dramatic experience into something like a social ritual . . .

Shakespeare's history plays had worked up to a climax in *Henry V*, so closely involved in the enthusiasms aroused by the Earl of Essex. The English history play collapsed, but Miss Bradbrook sees the genre continuing during Shakespeare's middle period, the period of the great tragedies, in the form of the mythical 'British history', based on Geoffrey of Monmouth, with its tale of the descent of British kings from Brut, the Trojan – the history outlined by Spenser as leading to the providential appearance of Queen Elizabeth I as the culmination of prophecy. But something terrible had happened to the British history. The 'Brutan' plays, *Macbeth* and *Lear*, are tragedies, and *Lear* is one of the direst tragedies in the whole of literature.

Coming to Shakespeare's last plays, the period of his 'late romances', Miss Bradbrook asserts their importance and devotes a large proportion of her book to their examination. Instead of seeing Shakespeare's later Jacobean period as an aftermath to the great histories, comedies and tragedies, she sees it as a living return to his earlier inspiration. She is fascinated by a historical figure in this period, Henry, Prince of Wales, who died tragically and unexpectedly in 1612, but not before he had made himself felt as an energetic character, a potential leader of outstanding promise, in marked contrast to his father. There is a good deal about Prince Henry in Miss Bradbrook's book – and about his sister Princess Elizabeth – and she allows the Prince a position of definite influence on the literature of the period. *The Tempest* was produced, together with other Shakespeare plays, as part of the festivals for the Princess and her husband. Miss Bradbrook stresses the importance of these celebrations as marking the end of the Shakespearean era in the theatre.

The Living Monument is of much interest to me, since in my book *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (1975) I argued that the last plays reflect an 'Elizabethan revival' centred on Prince Henry and his sister, and that through this revival or renovation of 'Elizabethanism', within the Jacobean period, Shakespeare recaptured his former hopes and translated them into the romances. It is strange that Miss Bradbrook does not make more use of *Cymbeline* as a play which caps her argument: this last play is definitely a 'Brutan' play and one which has emerged from history into romance in the Prince Henry period.

In the course of her discussion of the Shakespearean opus Miss Bradbrook makes many references to the work of other critics, to such an extent that her book becomes almost a survey of current critical literature. Perhaps her most penetrating pages are those in which she analyses, as a critic in the literary tradition, the profundities of *Macbeth* and *Lear*. Yet many and various are the strands worked into her account of the Shakespearean drama. She is interested in reactions between dramatist and audience and discusses the plays as sociology. As a theatre historian, she follows theatre history in relation to the plays, with special reference to the influence of masque on the late Shakespeare and to contemporary pageantry and the reflection of its imagery in the drama.

There is one type of Elizabethan pageantry which Miss Bradbrook rather neglects, despite its relevance to her themes. The central pageants of the Elizabethan age were the annual Accession Day Tilts in which the cult of the Queen was expressed in setting of chivalrous romance. These Tilts were highly theatrical: the tilters appeared in fancy costumes, and the performances contained elements foreshadowing the masque, even in the Elizabethan period. The presentation of the Queen as a Vestal Virgin, which Shakespeare reflects in the famous lines in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was produced as a mythological tableau at a Tilt. The development of chivalrous exercises into masques is clear in the masques for Prince Henry as a Fairy Prince, successor to the Fairy Queen of the Tilts. The close association of fantastic chivalrous exercises with theatrical developments was a European phenomenon, as for example in the dramatic festivals at the French court. All this side of Elizabethan and Jacobean pageantry would connect with Miss Bradbrook's theory of continuity between Elizabethan and Jacobean phenomena, and with her interest in interaction between theatre and masque.

And there is no doubt that the chivalric spectacle was a fundamental influence on Shakespeare. It was the official celebration of the cult of the monarchy, the theme with which he was so deeply concerned. The English history plays running at the Globe, which Miss Bradbrook has characterised as the use of history as a social ritual, were contemporary with the courtly social ritual of the Tilt. The public theatre and the tilt-yard were both playing-places for the acting out of the great drama of the age, historical, national and religious.

One critic whom Miss Bradbrook does not mention is G. Wilson Knight, whose book, *The Imperial Theme*, draws out of his sensitive understanding of the poetry the idea that there is an imperial theme running always in Shakespeare's mind, in the sense of a universal religious meaning which he seeks in the world and in history. My studies of the imperial imagery used of Elizabeth endeavoured to show that the universal religious theme was present in that imagery, through the adoption of traditional images of sacred empire, such as the image of Astraea, the Just Virgin of the Golden Age, to express the religious-imperial role ascribed to her. The Elizabethan images of universal empire contained within them those associations which Wilson Knight elicits from his study of the 'imperial theme' in Shakespeare's poetry. The imagery invoked universal precepts; and in a period in which universal ideas were terribly threatened by the divisions of Christendom, such imagery was charged with great poignancy.

Referring to my study of Queen Elizabeth as Astraea, Miss Bradbrook makes the strange remark that this image belonged to pageants and pageant-like plays, but 'could not be used in the drama of the public stages because it was essentially a static image'. This seems rather to miss the point

Labour Weekly
THIS FRIDAY 10p
Shirley Williams
INTERVIEWED IN
Labour Councillor
Gets to the heart of matters that matter

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of the religious-imperial imagery and its impact on the Shakespearean conception of monarchy as a religious and universal theme, with implications stretching far beyond that of the national chronicle. It was the failure of some immeasurably vast concept which made the tragedy of *Lear* so unbearable, a tragedy of Greek proportions involving the whole universe of nature and of man.

What was the nature of the theatre in which these stupendous chronicles were first enacted? A useful feature of Miss Bradbrook's study is the list of the London theatres of the period and map showing their theatrical scene, however, she rightly stresses that it was with Burbage's original theatre of 1576, and its descendant, the Globe, that Shakespeare was identified. What was the original Theatre like? Miss Bradbrook refuses to admit a classical influence on the design of the Theatre-Globe; but her own chronicle might suggest that the setting for this historical drama should contain at least some allusion to a Trojan-Roman origin for the British theatre.

However, it would be pointless to go over again here my arguments for the Globe as an adaptation of the ancient theatre, a Theatre of the World, reflecting the cosmos in the proportions of its geometrical plan. Now that we have in the new Olivier Theatre a wonderfully beautiful modern adaptation of the ancient theatre, we can await the influence of this on understanding of the Shakespearean drama presented in this successor to Burbage's Theatre, the National Theatre of the Britain of today.

Eric Korn

Life After Birth

The Facts of Life by R. D. LAING *Allen Lane* £3.25

And here he comes again, Glasgow's very own Wee Yin, with a song, a story and a word or two of wisdom. (His partner, Big Yang, will be along later.) But despite the carnival typography, the playlets, the anecdotes, some cogent, some illustrating the ancient Zen technique of No Point, this is one of Laing's most serious, modest and appealing books.

The autobiographical sketches set the author in a sufficiently bizarre context: 'my father was the only one in his family to marry and, with one possible exception, the only one ever to commit sexual intercourse.' And there was Old Pa, Uncle Jack, ('daft with heatstroke in China') and Wee Johnnie, the midget, and a school where drawings of genitalia were dirty, but a foetus in a womb was sheer filth. Small wonder that 'as far back as I can remember I tried to figure out what was going on between these people'.

But how far back is that? The main thrust of the book is to take the formative years back from childhood to embryology, from the playcentre to the placenta. It is his way (a Laing Way that has many turnings) to present a thesis in divers guises, from the modest to the outrageous. On the one hand:

> How we feel about a past that is beyond conscious recall does not necessarily tell us anything about the *past* as it was then. It may tell us only of our present reactions, of our present responses, of our present fantasies of then.

On the other hand, eating a bowl of porridge after seeing *Lost Horizon* at the age of eight is a replay of his primal lost love. Shangri-La → womb; princess turns to old woman and crumbles to dust → placenta withers and dies. The arrow represents what New Maths calls a mapping, an analogical relationship both less presumptuous and more evasive than a homology.

The diffident statement that 'it does not seem to me to be, a priori, nonsense, or antecedently impossible, that prenatal patterns may be mapped on to natal and postnatal experience' leads to less diffident clinical interpretations, implantation dreams, large department stores = the endometrium, blastocyst anxiety. There are obvious neurological difficulties about attributing a precise, graphic and poetic sensitivity and memory to an undifferentiated ball of cells, and still greater difficulties about implicating the genotype as the carrier of this information.

Other consequences are to shift the burden of anxiety from parenthood back to pregnancy, and to re-establish the birth trauma. Birth (implantation *in* reverse) is 'a major psychobiological disaster zone'; the baby, sentient, sensitive and already grieving, is grabbed, pinched, slapped, squeezed and clamped and cut:

> Could we be haunted by our placenta
> our intra-uterine
> twin
> lover
> rival
> double?

Are there good medical reasons for cutting the umbilical cord in a healthy birth? Or is it just the first of a long series of arbitrary, tyrannical assaults?

> I have seen a global organismic reaction occur the instant the cord is cut. It would appear to be neurologically impossible. There are no nerves in the umbilical cord. . . . whether it does happen can be settled very soon by direct observation . . .

Indeed; there must be 5,000 births a year within a mile of Laing's place of work, and a convincing pile of data could come within a month; but why, Laing would ask, should statistics be more convincing than facts? He's a touch fugal about the scientific method; Occam's razor is an excellent principle, but

> in modern scientific theory and practice an attitude is often encountered which takes its justification from this principle but which I do not think has anything to do with it . . . This is to discount the existence of X because we have no hypothesis to account for it . . . the net of the scientific method does not actually catch the ocean upon which it is cast.

This is true and beautifully put, yet the history of science shows – well it shows *me* at any rate – that excluded ideas have a way of forcing themselves through the meshes until the fisherman is obliged to build a new net; while too-inclusive nets leave you with unstrained soup, or a deck full of monsters which are harder to dislodge. *Magna est veritas et prevalebit.*

But there is another prong to Laing's attack on science: its inhumanity of method and premiss.

> I don't see how we can expect to get away with tormenting our fellow creatures in the ways we do without this evil method (practice) corrupting our ways of constructing what we are doing (theory).

It seems sentimental to believe that torture never yields the truth, but possible to argue that anyone who practises vivisection of frogs or electrotherapy on humans must have so distorted a vision of the world that what he reports is untrustworthy.

Neurophysiology does not consist in cutting animals to bits to explore the relationship between mind and brain, but Laing's final thrust is that it is irrelevant. 'Most people called psychologists today don't believe the psyche exists,' he points out, and quotes with approbation Jung's 'we must completely give up the idea of the psyche being somehow connected with the brain'. In Eliot's words, Laing says to the neurologist 'What you have to say/Is either something that I know already,/Or else irrelevant/or else untrue.' Or rather all three at once, which is overkill.

Laing's own practise, as it emerges from this book, is what good doctors have done since Hippocrates: to pay attention to the patient, especially when that patient's complaint – or rather the complaint of his family and physicians – is that he is talking nonsense, to listen without judging. While a patient who wants to be quiet but can't help screaming may legitimately be given a tranquilliser (a misnomer, Laing points out: no drug ever gave tranquillity), a patient who wants to scream might well be allowed to:

> The more aware of our feelings, the more competent we are likely to be in restraining them when necessary and the more easily will we loosen such restraint when circumstances no longer seem to require it.

This is potent and cogent, and not reinforced by comical quotes:

> I hated my feelings
> I told them to fuck off
> and they fucked off
> I've never heard from them since.

Yes, all human life is here, including the

THE ABOLITION OF WAR
Keith Robbins. pp 255.
£5 + 47p postage.
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Ritchie Ovendale. pp 353.
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superb excuse of the Tantricist caught *in flagrante*: 'that's not a woman, that's a waterfall.' Laing tries on so many hats that he's in danger of vanishing under a mountain of millinery; Liberty Cap, War bonnet, tam o'shanter and lama's red hat; but the voice that emerges is unmuffled, subversive and original:

> It always seems to me very strange that we have this word [paranoia] which means, in effect, that someone feels he is being persecuted when the people who are persecuting him don't think that he is. But we haven't got a word for the condition in which you are persecuting someone without realising it, which I would have thought is as serious a condition as the other, and certainly no less common.

J. H. Plumb

Juggernaut

The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay Vol. III, January 1834-August 1841, edited by Thomas Pinney *Cambridge* £18.80

Macaulay aroused envy in life and envy in death. His range of learning made most men feel inferior, his eloquence daunted the majority of members of the House of Commons and his debating skill overawed most men who sat on committees with him. It was, above all, the uncompromising certainty of his judgment that repelled most, particularly when that judgment was sustained by an unparalleled mastery of fact: in private or public argument Macaulay could be as ruthless as a juggernaut. That he was supremely gifted can scarcely be denied, but what his letters reveal is another side of Macaulay's nature and they help to explain why those who did not envy and hate him, loved and admired him. In life or in death it is difficult to be indifferent to Macaulay.

Recently having struggled through two long tedious volumes of John Locke's correspondence – full of complex and vapid metaphors, in which two pages might be taken up to say that he was sorry not to have written sooner – what a relief it is to turn to another volume of Macaulay's letters, edited as – to be fair – Locke's are, by a great scholar who skilfully restrains his comment to the necessities. And once more Thomas Pinney is to be congratulated: these letters could not be in better hands. They make quite wonderful reading. There are magnificent descriptions of Macaulay's arrival in India and the long trek to the mountains to be with Lord William Bentinck who was taking his summer's ease on the Deccan: there are equally interesting letters about Calcutta; vivid and trenchant descriptions of Rome after Macaulay had returned to Europe. Just as fascinating are the letters to Thomas Flowers Ellis in which Macaulay discusses his reading. And what reading! Macaulay, in India, devoured the classics, almost all Greek and Roman writers, certainly all the major writers in prose and verse, but also volume upon volume of obscure men whom even dedicated classical scholars would scarcely open today. And his judgments are always pungent, realistic and convincing. Thucydides was the incomparable historian for Macaulay; and he knew that it was dangerous for him to read any other historian immediately he had finished Thucydides. Macaulay also found that he even diminished Tacitus. This gargantuan fare of classical literature would have been quite beyond the capacity of most men with nothing else to do, but Macaulay was very actively reforming Indian law and education as well as keeping dozens of friends and all of his family happy with long epistles. Also he wolfed down, besides the classics, a good deal of Spanish and Italian literature as well. On his leisurely return to England, he set aside ten hours a day to master German in four months. Naturally he did so.

One might have thought that only a deeply contented and settled man could have such gusto for the world's literature. The reverse is true. Much of the obsessive compulsion to read and read and read sprang from the heartbreaks that Macaulay suffered in India. Macaulay had throughout his life been passionately attached to his family: he felt for his mother as well as his sisters very deep love. He never disguised the depth of his feeling either to them or to himself, or even to his closest and most intimate friends. No sooner had he arrived in India than Hannah, the sister with whom he expected to spend four to five years of affectionate bliss, became engaged to, and quickly married, Charles Trevelyan. His letters recounting his grief possess real nobility. Her happiness was all he sought and his loss had to be borne with what stoicism he could master. He found an antidote in obsessive reading. And then a second blow fell: Margaret, his other young sister to whom he was also profoundly attached, died – indeed she had died months before the news reached him. There is no doubt that this double blow drove him to a despair that almost crippled him. Some historians have seen fit to describe these deep commitments to his sisters as 'almost incestuous'. This is to be too clinical. I doubt if the slightest sexual connotation ever crossed Macaulay's mind. Had it done so, I do not think that he could have written so fully about his feelings to his friend Ellis, or to other members of his family, or acknowledged them to Hannah's husband. The family had always been the Eden of the child Macaulay, a paradise of warmth and comfort and love to which he always wanted to return or to recreate in adult life. Certainly these letters betray a psychological complexity which at one time I did not believe Macaulay to possess, but it is a complexity not easy to analyse, and I think 'almost incestuous' far too simple. Everything that Macaulay wrote, whether it was about the Vatican or the effects of Hannah's marriage, is astoundingly candid; such candour is very very rare, particularly in gifted and imaginative men.

Sad and desperate or full of excitement, curiosity and fun, these letters are admirable reading. Macaulay can never be dull, not even in his address to the electors of Edinburgh. He is a great letter writer and had he never even written an essay or a word of his history, his claim to be one of England's greatest writers would still be a serious one.

Christopher Hitchens

Raising Hopes

Lonrho: Portrait of a Multinational by S. CRONJE, M. LING and G. CRONJE *Friedmann* £6.95 *Penguin* £1.50

How the Other Half Dies by SUSAN GEORGE *Penguin* £1.00

Who would have thought Edward Heath capable of a deathless phrase? Yet the unacceptable face of capitalism will probably outlast the system itself (even if, as I've been reliably told, he meant to say 'facet' and fluffed his notes under fire). It is, as a matter of fact, a great pity that all the ballyhoo about this amazingly tentacular company should have been generated by its payment of backhanders and outrageous perks. What else would one expect? But they are small potatoes when set against the global reach of Lonrho as a concern which extracts, refines, converts, farms, hoards and exchanges on the scale depicted here. The pusillanimity of lawyers delayed publication for a while; and so the book came out after the Department of Trade inspectors reported last July. Never mind, *Portrait of a Multinational* gives the code and directions necessary for a reading of that report. And it furnishes the political in-betweens which are so vital for an understanding of how trans-continental business works and reproduces itself.

The authors convey the sweep of the thing. Exploitation has several meanings and all of them are inseparable from capitalism. The first and familiar one is that relating to the way in which men who own capital can press others into their service and dictate the terms of the deal. The second, and more interesting, is that which describes the conversion of previously fallow resources into wealth and energy. Capitalism has always been good at the second by being good at the first. The question is, does the vigour of a Tiny Rowland create more opportunities for more people than would otherwise be the case? The Cronjés *mère et fille* and Ms Ling seem to

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Among this week's contributors:

FRANCES YATES is the author of *Theatre of the World, Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the 16th Century, Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach* and *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment.*

J. H. PLUMB is Professor of Modern English History at the University of Cambridge.

J. G. BALLARD'S latest collection of stories, *Low-Flying Aircraft,* has just been published.

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reserve their judgment on this. But they provide some fascinating material. In the southern cone of Africa, Lonhro is complicit in a barbarous and racist system. Elsewhere it is the Africans' favourite foreign company, full of schemes for harnessing surplus Arab cash for ambitious projects and scornful of the rival firms who disdain the coin of the wogs. It is, like capitalism in general, a great expectation-raiser. Those who argue that capitalism is morally neutral and profit has no smell will find some ammunition here – except that moral neutrality has its own moral commitment; doing nothing about something is a policy. The record of capitalism in Africa is both dynamic and disgusting, the authors are right to point out that it would be better if Africans did not have to rely on it at all.

It did take me about six hours to read *How the Other Half Dies*, and Susan George points out that 2,500 people will die of starvation or deficiency diseases in any such given period. That is the reality of the 'Third World' in which the merchant venturers of Lonrho cruise for deals. This book is excellent in evoking outrage. It shows how *consciously*, and in their own words, there are rich men and powerful organisations planning to use food shortage (and their own superabundance of the stuff) for political purposes in the next decade or two. It also gives some idea of how terrifying the food situation already is, and how the poor are blamed for their own suffering. It would be too NEW STATESMANlike to suggest it as an anti-Christmas present. But read it in the New Year.

Science Fiction

J. G. Ballard

Package Tours

Martian Time-Slip by PHILIP K. DICK *New English Library* £3.95
Bring the Jubilee by WARD MOORE *New English Library* £3.50
Galactic Empires: Vols I and II edited by Brian Aldiss *Weidenfeld* £4.95 each
Skyfall by HARRY HARRISON *Faber* £3.50
The Feast of St Dionysus by ROBERT SILVERBERG *Gollancz* £3.80

Only the blurbs have been changed to protect the guilty . . . With nearly 30 books to read or review, some 2 million words, one is faced nonetheless with little that is actually new, and with certain unanswerable questions about science fiction's extraordinary durability. At present SF titles flood from the world's printing presses – the intermittent crests and boomlets that kept the genre afloat in previous years have now coalesced into a wave-front of tsunami-like proportions. The possibilities of ransacking the past for unpublished material have long been exhausted, and editors now rely more than ever before on skilful repackaging. Anthologies are shuffled, the same stories permutated through endless Bests of the Year or Decade, and this or that award-winning series. Novels present a slight problem, but the method here is to devise a new and grandiose-sounding series title, and a uniform jacket design into which any novels whose rights have lapsed can be speedily fitted.

Whether because or in spite of this over-exploitation, SF somehow seems to survive. It is easy to forget that a large proportion of the SF currently on sale was written in the Forties and Fifties – all the classic Asimov, Bradbury, Heinlein and Van Vogt – and has passed the ten-year test two or three times over, while most of its contemporaries in the 'mainstream' have vanished into oblivion. The sheer durability of SF is due in large part, I think, to the fact that it is the last naïve fiction, keeping open house and ready to admit the wildest ideas to its ramshackle but enthusiastic world with the minimum of formality. The future is anything with a fin on it.

New English Library's so-called Master Series, edited by Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison, is a good example of recent repackaging. The first two novels, Philip K. Dick's *Martian Time-Slip* and Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*, have been dressed up in bizarre metallic jackets – useful, no doubt, to stack around you during a nuclear alert – but each stands firmly on its own originality. *Martian Time-Slip* (published originally in 1964, though now for the first time in Britain) describes a desolate, end-of-the-century Mars inhabited by doomed clairvoyants, an obsessed tycoon and an autistic child-hero who together move through a landscape that uncannily resembles southern California perceived through the glaze of some deep psychosis. 'Better to succumb to the schizophrenic process, join the rest of the world,' a character murmurs cheerfully on waking. Of the young hero's mental illness, Dick writes, 'Once the person becomes psychotic, nothing ever happens to him again', but in fact the novel is full of incident, fusing terror and comedy in a unique way. More than any other SF writer, Dick is able to convey the sense of everyday reality as totally threatening.

Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*, first published in 1955, is a witty alternate-universe tale, based on the notion of a United States in which the South has won the civil war and the northern states are agrarian, backward and exploited. Part of the pleasure of the book, as Kingsley Amis remarks in his introduction, is the appearance of historical characters in inappropriate disguise – George B. Shaw, the obscure Irish pastor, the Swiss chief of police Carl Jung with an interest in the psychology of the man of action, Field Marshal Liddell-Hart and the stay-at-home Bostonian essayist Henry James.

Galactic Empires is another elaborate compilation job. Each contains a dozen or so stories from SF's self-styled golden age 25-30 years ago, wide-screen space adventures that at times read like the archest parody. Characters 'curse with hopeless fury', bellow 'Great Space!' and 'The monsters! They're attacking!' Here and there one comes across some really weird line like 'It was simple, monstrous, enormous. Femininity became carcinogenetic', which suddenly reveals the strange psychology underpinning this apparently harmless farrago. Brian Aldiss is a tireless anthologiser, but for once he is recycling more waste matter than a space-shuttle's latrine. Most of this pulp fiction reads as if it has not wholly emerged from another medium – the comic strip – and is vaguely interesting as an example of clumsy and hesitant evolution from the visual to the verbal form. That now defunct glossy rag, *SF Monthly*, with its lavish illustrations and faltering prose narrative, revealed the reverse impulse at work.

Harry Harrison's *Skyfall* is the only new novel in the present batch and at least has the merit of dealing with contemporary reality. All the sadder, I think, that he should have sent out a special disclaimer, insisting that *Skyfall* is 'not science fiction'. Presumably this means that he believes SF belongs to the realm of fantasy and the improbable, a view contrary to my own – if one is to write about the present day it is difficult not to incorporate at least some element of SF. Harrison's story is the account of a 2,000-ton satellite fuelled by uranium-235 which moves into a decaying orbit, threatening atomic disaster to those unlucky enough to find themselves in its landing path. The novel is efficiently told but somehow unstirring, its lack of conviction for some reason exaggerated by its careful straining after authenticity. Perhaps the space programmes, after their apparent failure to touch our imaginations in any real way, are now convincing only when presented as out-and-out fantasy.

The Feast of St Dionysus contains a novella and four short stories by Robert Silverberg. Written within the past two to three years, they illustrate the remarkable metamorphosis of Silverberg from an unashamed commercial writer of prodigious output – collators of his work have suggested that he may be the most prolific author of all time, a title he himself yielded in a recent interview to John Creasey – into a writer of serious and intelligent SF with an inevitably far more restricted audience. The title novella is an excellent story of an astronaut plagued by irrational guilt after becoming the only survivor of the first mission to Mars. Searching for a new meaning to life, he drives into the California desert where he finds peace at last in the nature mysticism of a small religious community. Almost a description at one remove of Silverberg's rejection of the interplanetary space-ways and self-discovery within his own version of inner space, the story owes nothing to the traditional conventions of the genre. If his fellow writers in the United States would only follow his example the effects upon American SF, still locked within its ghetto, might produce an imaginative surge even more startling than that of the Forties.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

John Coleman

Twig?

Marathon Man *Plaza 1 and 2*
The Enforcer *Warner West End 2 and ABC Shaftesbury Avenue from 26 December*
The Pink Panther Strikes Again *Odeon, Leicester Square*
The Ritz *Warner West End 4*

A trifle, maybe, but suddenly one remembered. It was John Schlesinger who, back in 1972, was the director – out of an octet chosen to cover the Olympic Games – that ended up not only following our Ron Hill in the section entitled 'The Longest' but also had the ungrateful, near-impossible task of cinematically coping with the Israeli beastliness. It can hardly be a mere coincidence, then, that inspired him to take on, as his first thriller, a William Goldman novel and script with a New York student and long-distance runner as its hero and a fiendish Nazi war criminal as its villain. *Marathon Man* jogs off promisingly with Babe Levy (Dustin Hoffman) pounding along by the river on a training stint, to cut incongruously to an older fellow making a withdrawal from a safe deposit bank. This senior citizen is soon engaged in a stupid car race on a city street ('you Mercedes bastard!' cries one, '*Jude*!' howls the other) which ends in a double death as they crash into a petroleum truck. Doggedness, mystery, racism: all established in a few shots. In what seems no time, we are in Paris, a bomb goes off in a doll's pram, we move in on its upturned eyes. My own began to narrow a shade at this point: clearly this was to be no occasion to be caught napping.

And, indeed, the plot has as many ramifications as a upas-tree. Young Babe, obsessed with proving the innocence of his father, a McCarthy suicide, is visited by his brother Doc (Roy Scheider), some sort of US agent ('Don't you ever clean this armpit of an apartment?') whom he equivocally worships. Meanwhile, bald, prim-lipped Szell (Laurence Olivier) has landed at Kennedy Airport in the middle of a baggage strike. There have been muggings, a spine-cracking fight; back in Paris again a body slumps with slit throat at the Opéra, a girl wanders into a dark arcade, a subdued sound and a black-and-white football bounces into view. To pursue my image, twig by twig something very nasty begins to grow. Diamonds are at the bottom of it; that safe deposit owner was Szell's Americanised brother; and now Szell himself has come out of hiding in Uruguay to reclaim the gems. Babe acquires a pretty French girl, Elsa (Marthe Keller), in the university library, but *is* she French? Then Doc staggers into Babe's place to die of a stab wound. It is to turn out he was less than the good guy imagined. Did he tell? To find out, sinister Szell goes after Babe, with his minions and a set of dentist's tools.

Photographed with conscious elegance by Conrad Hall (through leaves, butterflies on a window, exquisite anglings) and set in more fancy, cosmopolitan locations than even Hitchcock would normally allow himself (Szell knifes Doc absurdly by the high-lit Lincoln Center fountain), the film seems to lose its way between the chic and the sick. Impressionism is becoming fashionable in the cinema, I know, but my last disillusionment came in an explanation of all the double- and triple-ploys involved in *Marathon Man*, delivered somewhere near the close by a chap from 'The Division' at speed and at length. Either we should have had sufficient clues to guess for ourselves or we had been entertained enough not to give a hoot, anyway.

In contrast (and to prove we are not irreclaimably squeamish), a kind word or two for *The Enforcer*, the latest exploits of Inspector 'Dirty' Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood), the roughneck San Francisco cop who puts his gun where other people's mouths are. The murder-count is not low but neither, pleasantly, is the number of guffaws. Stirling Silliphant and Dean Reisner pepper events with sexy backchat and such gems as 'Here's a seven-point suppository, Captain'. This genial offer is made, of course, by Harry, once more being invited to hand in his badge for having taken the law into his own horny mitts. The formula is by now established. He performs a couple of quick, professional acts – in this case, kicking a pretend heart-attack victim to his feet in a restaurant, telling him he's had his free meal; and driving an expensive police car through a liquor store front to demolish a hold-up gang with hostages – before getting on with sorting out the major problem. Usually around here, he loses that badge temporarily and is either begged to come back or goes it alone with help from loyal chums still aboard. The main story concerns a gang of terrorists holding the city to ransom with stolen new-style armaments: the twist is that Harry's new partner is a policewoman, endearingly played by Tyne Daly. I warn you that most of Harry's partners get shot: another convention.

There have been five *Pink Panthers*, not four as the production notes maintain (someone has forgotten the 1968 Bud Yorkin one with Alan Arkin), but Blake Edwards's *The Pink Panther Strikes Again*, with Peter Sellers once more in complete uncontrol as the ineffable French *flic*, approaches the best: they all do, one suspects, tending alike to be marvellous in spasms. A second glance at the synopsis has persuaded me to put it away. *Bref*, Dreyfus (Herbert Lom), last seen huddled in a loonie bin thanks to his subordinate's little ways, has been replaced by Clouseau (need I say Sellers?) as Chief Inspector. What succeeds thereafter is excess: Dreyfus escapes to become a kind of super-Mabuse, out to get the world if he is not given Clouseau. A twitching Lom appears on international TV, interrupting two gentlemen bearing uncanny likenesses to a President F—— and a Henry K. as they watch a ball game: he then makes vanish the UN building.

Hard to pick a favourite item out of the crescendo goonery. Sellers continues to achieve impossible phonetic distortions with such monosyllables as '*pheune*', to which he here adds '*heumpe*' (a Quasimodo inflatable he assumes for reasons kept scrupulously unclear). Unwisely in the outcome, he also announces, 'I was kneuwn as the Pavlova of the parallel bars'. He makes so many doomed attempts to swing across a moat that laughter is the only relief.

Unfortunately, short shrift to Richard Lester's *The Ritz*, Terrence McNally's adaptation of his camp-followers' 1975 Broadway hit. Some of it, which concerns one Proclo (excellent Jack Weston) hiding out in the seedy Manhattan bathhouse of the title as the last place in New York his murderous brother-in-law will look for him, *some* of it is inventive, kinky fun. Treat Williams as a straight, soprano detective is splendid ('I was born with this voice' – 'So was Yma Sumac'); the decor has a great eeriness, half-prison, half-pleasure-drome; and Rita Moreno as a no-holds-barred chanteuse ('And now a salud to Cul Porde . . .') squawks away with the show.

Television

Ian Hamilton

Toytowns

When your little ones begin dismembering their plastic toys this Christmas you may like to give a thought to the following statistics: in Hong Kong there are over 40,000 industrial accidents each year, and a large proportion of these are experienced by illegally employed child labourers. Sixty thousand kids between the ages of 12 and 14 drop out of school to take work of one sort or another – a lot of them in factories where they operate antiquated machines that have a nasty way of slicing off young hands and fingers. Hong Kong is the world's biggest exporter of toys and the toy factories are unamusingly among the most committed exploiters of child labour. So when young Caspar next rips the vitals from his new Marine do bear in mind that little Lee out there in our prosperous Crown Colony may well have lost a limb or two putting the thing together in the first place.

This was the burden of *Made in Hong Kong*, the last in the present (and, one must say, consistently enterprising and

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intelligent) series of *World in Action* (Granada). It was a timely probe, but for all the unsettling statistics not quite the journalistic coup it might have been. We did for sure see many a chopped hand, and we were taken to visit impoverished parents who explained why they had no choice but to send their infants out to work. But when it came to getting inside the factories, or to quizzing the guilty men who run the operation, the sleuths kept running up against brick walls. This being so, it seemed silly to boast about 'our hidden camera' (supposed to show appalling working conditions, but actually registering mild scruffiness) or to make a big thing out of how they hung around outside a factory and 'saw young workers, but security was unusually tight'. Their 'case' was easily established by court records (showing the absurdly low fines slapped on convicted child-employers) and by interviews with workers, parents and – one lucky break – an ex-employer who was prepared to spill the beans. No need, really, for the 'undercover, we visited the Blue Box factory' routine; though, I suppose, if you're investigative, you must be seen to have investigated – albeit that the wily Chink kept making sure you drew a blank.

One wouldn't mind, but in this instance, surely more time could have been spent studying just how slowly Hong Kong is dragging its feet towards some kind of welfare state. It was hard to have absolute contempt for the employer who, when approached by a desperately poor parent, agreed to give her child a job; much easier, I found, to loathe the smug Commissioner for Labour who, when approached by World in Action, agreed that 'yes, there is a moral principle, but there is also an economic question. We are squeezing our Industrial Revolution into 15 years'. It was this last proposition that should have been more thoroughly investigated. Hong Kong's toy industry alone mops up £250m. a year.

'Four years ago there came home again a man who was born to be king.' Odd things happen to James Cameron's syntax when he writes for television, and the more so when kings and empires are at stake. His script for *Abdication* (BBC-1) was round-backed with sonority – 'born of the remote and regal Queen Mary, if he grew up wary and uneasy the seeds may have been down in that austere parentage' – and throughout took for granted that few worse things can happen to a man than to be throneless. Heart-strings unplucked, I quite enjoyed the stiff-limbed newsreel material, and it was something of a jolt to be reminded of how low it then was to be both divorced *and* American. But analysis was thin on the ground; the suggestion seemed to be that Mrs Simpson expected to land the crown ('she thought he was like the President of the United States – that he had real power') but that Edward was glad to be shot of it, and thought he was doing it for her. If true, no small misunderstanding; and it could account for the somewhat glazed expression they both wore throughout the ensuing years of exile.

It wasn't at all clear why Ludovic Kennedy chose Sacheverell Sitwell for his weekly *Tonight* interview, except that the old boy does seem to have a nice place in the country. Certainly Kennedy's curiosity was less than tigerish, and one suspected that if the interview had gone on for even a few minutes more they would both have run out of things to say. As it was, the whole thing was absurdly over-prepared, with Kennedy barking out questions that were really cues for Sacheverell-style anecdotes. 'Augustus John – of course a very bohemian character . . . Did you . . . see any of this?' 'Well, there was the time when. . .' 'You were married in Paris. Was the marriage service. . . memorable in any way?' One longed, of course, for the answer to be 'No. What makes you think there was?' but no such luck. Apart from the odd second or two when S.S. looked as if he might have forgotten which story went with which question, all trundled along smoothly. Mostly on the hunt for tittle-tattle, Kennedy did at one point feel obliged to make a gesture towards literary history. 'You carried on a correspondence with the Futurists – what did they want?' Sacheverell looked faintly ashamed. 'And what about the Vorticist movement? What was that?' 'Th-that was Wyndham Lewis' '*What*?' 'Wyndham Lewis.' 'Oh.' A tricky moment this, because Lewis had been named in Kennedy's intro. as a Sitwell scourge. But what the hell; in no time at all he was back to asking the old aesthete if he ever watched the box (he does, and he's a Kojak fan). Sitwell himself only got going on the subject of his critics; it seems that he's been outsmarting them for years by issuing all his verse in small private editions – no less than 40 of these have been withheld from Grub Street's scorn. A slightly deranged mischievousness afflicted the bard as he described this ruse. He should be careful, though; now that we know about them, maybe we'll go out and track them down. Or then again, maybe we won't.

Michael Parkinson, limp from his confrontation with the animal kingdom, opted this week for two limpid pirouettists. John Curry somehow managed to make Rudolf Nureyev seem like Rocky Marciano and Parkinson basked in the skater's mincingly unthreatening garrulity. How to cut ice with international juries? Parky asked. Well, it all depends on East and West. There was, of course, no suggestion that *we* ever feel tempted to mark *them* down, when the competitions happen here. In any case, this cold warrior thought he knew how to 'psyche' the other side into a sound appreciation of his merits. Parkinson gave the boy a boyish smile, as if he fully understood.

Wislawa Szymborska

Theatrical Impressions

In tragedy I find the sixth act most important:
when they arise from stage battlefields,
adjust their wigs and robes,
pull out the knife from the breast,
remove the noose from the neck,
stand in line amongst the living
facing the audience.

Bows individual and collective:
a white hand on a wounded heart,
a suicide curtsying,
a beheaded nodding.

Bows in pairs:
fury offering an arm to gentleness,
the victim gazing blissfully in the torturer's eyes,
the revolutionary ungrudgingly marching with the tyrant.

Eternity pressed by the toe of a golden slipper.
Morals dispersed with the brim of a hat.
An incorrigible readiness to repeat it all tomorrow.

A file of those who died much earlier
in acts three and four and between the acts.
The miraculous return of those vanished without trace.

The thought that in the wings they patiently waited
not shedding their costumes
not taking off their make-up
moves me more than tragic tirades.

But truly uplifting is the falling curtain
and what can still be glimpsed beneath it:
here a hand hastily grabs a flower,
there another snatches a dropped sword.
Only then a third, unseen,
accomplishes its task:
grips me by the throat.

translated from the Polish by Adam Czerniawski

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Keats Appeal

Julian Barnes

A Room of His Own

'I know the colour of that blood,' Keats remarked after a coughing fit in February 1820, 'It's arterial blood: I must die.' Of all the premature Romantic deaths, his is by far the most poignant and courageous: by comparison, Chatterton's seems an act of publicity, Shelley's the unsurprising price of nautical recklessness. Keats died in Rome, in a small, narrow room on the piano nobile of 26 Piazza di Spagna at the foot of the Spanish Steps. The last two and a half months of his life were spent there with his artist friend Joseph Severn, who played him Haydn symphonies on the piano and read to him each evening from Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*. The process of dying disclosed many ironies. Unlike most consumptives, Keats, though physically weak, remained mentally very active, as if in protest at the disease: 'At my worst,' he wrote to Charles Brown in his last letter, '[I] summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life.' His starvation diet – bread and milk at first, then a single anchovy per day – made him fear he would die of hunger rather than disease. Even the letters he received from Fanny Brawne (marked F.B. on the envelope by her mother so that Severn could intercept them if necessary) were too painful to contemplate opening. He finally died on 23 February 1821, and was buried, according to the local regulations governing victims of consumption, at night.

Subsequent tenants at 26 Piazza di Spagna included Axel Munthe; and the house was finally bought by the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association and opened to the public in 1909. Of the room in which Keats died, only the fireplace and the ceiling (containing the famous painted rosettes) survive, since all the furniture, and even the windows, had to be burnt after his death for fear of contagion. But the museum, for which the Association has just launched its first appeal, is far from being a cold memorial to the poet (as is, for example, the Goethe Museum in the Corso). Those who visit its four rooms and use its library comment on its distinctive atmosphere: restful to some, sad and brooding to others. Lady Birkenhead, the biographer of Severn and Chairman of the Appeal Committee, finds it 'slightly haunted'.

The museum's 10,000 books comprise what Edmund Blunden described as 'the finest library of English Romantic literature on the Continent'. As well as manuscripts and rare editions, and a fine collection of Mary Shelley letters, it is particularly strong on foreign translations of the Romantics. The house also contains a large number of memorabilia and curiosa: Keats's death-mask; portraits of his sister and brothers; Severn's famous death-bed sketch of the poet (which inspired Rilke); a sliver of Shelley's jawbone (acquired by Leigh Hunt at the same time as he cadged Shelley's heart from the funeral pyre); some of Milton's hair; a carnival mask worn by Byron in Venice; Keats's own drawing of a Grecian Urn; and Severn's rather stolid portrait of Shelley writing *Prometheus Unbound* at the Baths of Caracalla (Mary Shelley said that the nose was all wrong).

In addition to the house, the Association also maintains the graves of Keats, Severn, Shelley and Trelawny in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, and that of Fanny Brawne in Brompton Cemetery. Apart from a small grant from the Italian Cabinet Office, all of its income is obtained from letting off the remaining parts of 26 Piazza di Spagna. The freezing of rents in Rome since 1973 has precipitated a financial crisis: reserves have been rapidly eroded, and there is a genuine danger of closure. Though renewed efforts are being made to attract more visitors (the house is usefully sited between American Express and the English tea-rooms), the Association needs to raise £30,000 to ensure that the Memorial is secure for the foreseeable future. NS readers, we presume, are all giving cut-price subscriptions to their friends for Christmas; they are urged to consider how much they have saved, and send the balance, or more, to: The Keats-Shelley Memorial Appeal, 24 Wilton Street, London SW1.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Going Shrs

Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi *Hampstead*
Tartuffe *Greenwich*

I see from my evening paper that yet another group of flat-dwellers are looking for 'fourth girl, shr ktchn, own bdrm, £34 per cal mth'. Short of tricking himself out with a wig and a fluting treble, there's no way a male critic can know what goes on in those overpopulated ktchns and lonely bdrms, and, on behalf of that deprived species, I must thank Pam Gems for giving us an insight into what appears to be an increasingly common form of cohabitation, and one hitherto ignored by the British theatre. Her title is, as it turns out, not the extract from the police code-book it vaguely resembles, but a list of pet names. Vi (Mary Maddox) is a goofy, listless girl who eats nothing, says little, and seems happy only when she's drooping over her joss-sticks. Dusa (Brigit Forsyth) is an old resident lately returned to lament the loss of her children, who have been abducted by her estranged husband. Fish (Alison Fiske) is a political activist, very articulate about Rosa Luxembourg, and Stas (Diane Fletcher) a wayward nurse who spends her working days helping backward children, her lunch-hours stealing furs from stores, and her nights hiring herself out to lecherous Arabs. I dare say a dedicated riffler through the small ads would turn up a more representative sample of educated women on the loose, but then there is nothing more unrepresentative than the absolutely representative, just as there's no one less normal than the perfectly normal. In my admittedly limited experience of women the peculiar is generally to be expected.

In any case, I believed in Miss Gems's characters, though I wasn't always sure of her purpose in introducing them to us. When we see a play set in South Africa nowadays, we automatically ransack it for some comment, open or oblique, on apartheid. A black dramatist is presumed to be writing 'about' colour, an East-European one 'about' the communist system. Similarly, we're coming to believe that an intelligent woman can't write about intelligent women without making some general statement about their persecution; and there are hints enough in *Dusa, Fish* to suggest that this is indeed true of Miss Gems. Two of the four girls are ignominiously enslaved, one to a treacherous lover whose children she longs to have, the other to the children her spouse has vindictively stolen. They are, it appears, biologically unable to free themselves from their clamorous wombs. The third, seemingly so liberated, is actually showing spectacular symptoms of someone deprived of love as a child, and the fourth is a zonked-out hermit whose response to a bad male world is withdrawal. It doesn't add up to very encouraging news for those who would be blithely independent of men and, beneath the play's abundant humour, I detect a certain melancholy that this should be so. Indeed, more than melancholy, because the play ends in a suicide, and the suicide is the result of the same sort of obsession that doomed Miss Havisham to the company of a wedding-cake for three-quarters of a lifetime.

Perhaps, then, the play is 'about' those built-in compulsions contemporary feminists shrug off at their peril. Certainly, it is fresh, understanding, wittily acted and crisply directed by Nancy Meckler, quite a relief after the Greenwich *Tartuffe*, which might have been free-associated by Vi at her haziest. It is, of course, painful to have to follow the rococo reconstruction of the play Roger Planchon recently brought to the National, which found more in Molière than even he could comfortably contain. But how numb this seems by comparison, how glumly English, how limited in its emotional and intellectual scope. David Thompson, who is responsible both for the jogtrot translation and the ambling production, hasn't helped by ferrying set and characters into the heavy-draped 19th century, presumably on the argument that the play is about hypocrisy, the Victorians were notoriously hypocritical, and therefore the play is about the Victorians. One consequence is a strangely downbeat ending, in which Orgon is forgiven, not for his trespasses against the young Louis XIV, but for some obscure infringement of the

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Official Secrets Act; and the bearer of this good news isn't a shimmering herald, graciously dispatched by the Sun King, but a plodding old copper, down for the day from Scotland Yard. *Tartuffe* thus becomes a lugubrious case-history plundered from the Black Museum by Edgar Lustgarten.

Worse, Victorian dress tends to make dull acting duller, since ample gestures and ambitious emotions seem out of place in frock coats and severe gowns. The quarrel between Mariane and Valere, one of Planchon's imaginative triumphs, is especially dismal here. Ursula Mohan's generous Elmire and Freda Dowie's watchful, unsmiling Dorine are some compensation, and so, perhaps, is Ewan Hooper, though I don't myself see Orgon as a breezy NCO, embarrassingly infatuated with the battalion padre. But the main result of their efforts was to make me drum my fingers in anxious anticipation of Leonard Rossiter's Tartuffe. Surely *he* would galvanise the proceedings. Alas, he's at his most hidden and withdrawn, a sly smiler who saunters off to prison without so much as a caw of dismay, his leather face and sealskin hair seemingly unruffled by adversity. There were times when I thought something surprising might burst through all that cool and contempt, but it never happens. The mask remains uncracked to the last, leaving me, for one, to feel shortchanged by someone who had my absolute trust.

Opera

Eric Sams

A to Z

Der Rosenkavalier *Coliseum;* further performances 10, 12, 16, 18, 24 February and 1 March

Ariadne auf Naxos *Covent Garden;* further performances 7, 10, 15 January

A Night in Venice *Coliseum;* further performances 16, 20, 22, December and 6, 11, 13, 15, 20, 27, 29 January

Our musical capital is rich in current interest, as witness three Strauss operas, two Richards and a Johann, all within a bouquet's throw of each other. But the scene (like those works, some may feel) has a rather ominous glow of opulent but inflationary decadence. It was no surprise to find the Royal Opera being subsidised by Imperial Tobacco; the weed in the Garden, with a faint aroma of Imperial Rome. There too, patricians were flocking to see Ariadne on Naxos, or dropping into the Coliseum for fun and games; perhaps at the very moment when the barbarians were about to take over. Infiltration has already begun, to judge from the jostling in the coffee and cloakroom queues.

But all the productions under review were exceedingly civilised. *Der Rosenkavalier,* the clear winner, is now withdrawn, leaving the others still running; but it is scheduled to return next February with a new cast. Much is missed but little is marred by its English singing version. Hofmannsthal's art was already steeped in English sources; thus his plot and characterisation here are strongly coloured by Congreve (Baron Ochs is the concentrated essence of Sir Wilfull Witwoud, while the name Faninal may well be a subconscious echo of Fainall). The visual presentation is beholden to Beardsley, also much admired and studied by Hofmannsthal. The entire work is jewelled and intricate yet functional and communicative, like the 18th-century timepiece it is.

The right balance was not struck until the entry of Baron Ochs, well enunciated and enacted by Dennis Wicks. Thereafter everyone's words could be heard; and the orchestra, under the apt and able direction of Mark Elder, wound up the action and kept the plot ticking impeccably. Time, in all its moods and tenses, is the mainspring. We hear the 20th century describing the 18th in terms of the 19th (from Schubert to another Strauss). The married and mature Marschallin dallies with a much younger lover (Octavian, the Principal Boy part well taken by Josephine Barstow) in an affair so anachronistic that it's less adultery than adolescentery. The imbroglio goes like clockwork; score and stage resound with effective exits and entrances, comings and goings. Sunrise and curtain-rise over the *grande dame* and her beardless boyfriend are heralded by exultantly erotic horn-crows that intimate a further closing of the generation gap. More subtle and moving are the eloquent flashes of silence from the orchestra, for example, at the thought of stopping all the household clocks to stay the ravages of time. Vain hope; the silver rose, symbol of a fadeless beauty, is presented to the virginal rival Sophie (Joy Roberts, delectably vernal in voice and costume). Ava June's Feldmarschallin, outstanding among a strong cast, was autumnal only in attire; her singing and acting had the lingering warmth of a long summer.

Ariadne auf Naxos promised even better, with some famous names, a new production, and a score and libretto which are arguably even more inspired than those of *Der Rosenkavalier.* Hofmannsthal's gifts were surely for symbolism rather than realism; indeed, his genius for allegory may be said to display a complete myth-understanding of the real world. No wonder he is famous for his *Jedermann* (*Everyman*), which adds German significance to an English import. Ariadne the prima donna and Zerbinetta the soubrette spell out an A to Z guide to emotive life, from tragedy queen to *fille de joie.* They are flung together by fate when their two starring vehicles are forced to collide head-on by the whim of a Philistine patron, who decrees simultaneous performance so as to finish in good time for the firework display, his real highlight of the evening. That point, like many another, was amusingly made by Paul Hansard in the (very well) spoken part of the Major-Domo; at each 'Feuerwerk' his face lit up. But some of the squibs were decidedly damp, especially the jaded fun of the harlequinade improvised to amuse the inconsolable heroine. This divertissement was so blatantly aimed at the audience, not at Ariadne, that it fully deserved its failure with both. All it diverted was one's attention, from words and music too masterly to miss. Other dazzling highlights were dipped or dimmed, in playing and singing as in staging. Neither Edo de Waart's tempi nor the characterisations were always steady or strong enough to be truly illuminating. Heather Harper's Ariadne monologue had moments of radiance, and Geraint Evans as the Music Master was consistently polished. But the leading light was Yvonne Minton, despite an occasional wavering of intensity. Her taxing task was to embody the dictum of Yeats: 'The nobleness of the arts is the mingling of contraries, the extremity of sorrow, the extremity of joy.' These extremes meet in the key figure of the Composer, a demanding travesti role in which the ecstasy of creation meets with the agony of rejection. Its interpreter must go deep inside the character and sing out through its laughing or weeping masks of comedy or tragedy. This idea, according to some etymologists, lies at the root of the whole concept of impersonation; Yvonne Minton's was in the true classical tradition.

The same might be said, on a less exalted but still elevated level, of Valerie Masterson in *A Night in Venice.* Her tipsy scene, with its heady blend of sweet and dry, sparkle and bouquet, was among the interpolations and adaptations designed to make Johann Strauss dramatically viable. Unlike his namesake, the Waltz King had little sense of stage timing. In the result the work remains a patchwork, and its material though colourful is often thin; but it was never ragged, thanks to some deft underpinning from the conductor, Henry Krips. Among a talented cast, Terry Jenkins was expressive and handsome of voice and feature. Given seasonal good will, this agreeable entertainment will do well enough as a pantomime, with sumptuous sets, a transformation scene, assorted carnival novelties, and a lively and elegant Commedia dell' Arte ballet. At least this is the kind of good clean decadence that is suitable for the whole family.

Rock

Mark Kidel

Punk Shop

Something terrible happened to rock'n'roll when it started showing symptoms of maturity: an excess of paunches, limousines and luxurious mansions. The one-time music of teenage rebellion is still banned from the Albert Hall, but the old magic had almost been forgotten until the arrival of 'punk rock', the 'new wave' music of high-energy, low-budget bands like the Sex Pistols, the Damned and the Clash. Aggressive, erratic and, above all, well over ten years younger than any of the Stones, they have been hailed as the saviours of rock'n'roll, the restorers of the true faith – the identification with inarticulacy, violence and an uncom-

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promising defiance in the face of the adult world. Canvey Island's Eddie and the Hot Rods have a current hit with *Teenage Depression*, a typically gutsy assertion of the punk credo: we are young, we are misunderstood, so why don't you leave us alone?

Punk rock does not herald important new musical developments, but it represents a reassertion of cultural myths which have barely been kept alive by the ageing superstars who now dominate the pop world. Rock has always had to contend with a drift towards the middle of the road: the rough edges smoothed out for a mass market that does not go for violence or overt sexuality on stage. At the end of the line, Las Vegas beckons, the home of million-dollar rock'n'roll, lobotomised and frigid. Most recently the Bay City Rollers, clean-cut, and monuments to musical ineptitude, were thrust forward as the new spokesmen for the teenage masses. They became immensely popular, but they bore no relation to the old heart of rock culture – and how were the unsuspecting fans to know?

The whole of rock, however, had grown away from its roots, absorbing the influences of poetry, folk and protest music, and in the Sixties becoming central to the internal communications of a whole generation. What had once been pure 'body' music now also catered for the mind. It had qualified for the columns of the up-market Sundays, and even as a subject for an O-Level examination. The practitioners of rock and their fans had reached their thirties: 'Teach your children well. . . ' Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young sang in 1970, ushering in the age of matrimonial rock. It was still rock'n'roll, but groupies – once an essential part of the musicians' way of life – were threatened by the increasing presence of wives and children on tours. The old machismo was drooping a little. Pete Townshend, who had written the famous anthem to inarticulacy, *My Generation*, for his group the Who, could no longer smash guitars on stage without looking just a little ridiculous.

The music had become much slicker too: a concert by Rod Stewart not only relied on extravagant visual props, but also on a large slice of the London Symphony Orchestra. Record production, with the immense improvements brought in by 24-track recording, had become an elaborate art. But the stars were not just too old and sophisticated; they were also inaccessible: local boys who had made it so good that they had become untouchable, well beyond the conceptual reach of the factory-hands and office-boys whose money had made them rich.

A couple of years ago, a band from Canvey Island called Dr Feelgood drew much attention to itself by its scorn for slickness: their music was strongly reminiscent of the golden age of British R. & B. – simple melodies, fast tempi and an inexorable drive towards frantic climaxes. On stage they dressed badly, looked mean and ugly, and sweated profusely – once again, memories of the London clubs of the early Sixties, almost as if they were cultivating a certain innocence. They even went so far as to record their first album in mono, ignoring the technical advances of the last 15 years. When photographed, they stared angrily at the camera, the very picture of a bunch of losers from a forgotten island on the Thames Estuary. Suddenly, here were people making everything out of being the opposite of wholesome and successful. Not quite the Ur-punks, they were nevertheless a definite inspiration to many of the younger musicians of today.

In American slang, a 'punk' would appear to be a singularly unsavoury character: the word has often been used as a term of abuse. But the punk rockers are not ashamed of their acne and anger. They are young and resentful, and their hostility is directed against almost everything. The greatest enemy are the bands who might claim to have once been punks themselves, groups like the Who or the Stones. It is this concern with rock history which distinguishes them from others who have called for a return to the basic virtues of good ole rock-'n'roll. There is a dedicated self-consciousness about them: never before have musicians tried so hard to repel, adopting names like Johnny Rotten and Rat Scabies in order to emphasise their underdog status, the prerequisite of good rebel music. And the public indignation aroused by the Sex Pistols' mannered display of punk behaviour almost looks as if it had been programmed to echo, consciously accommodating the contemporary obsession with nostalgia, the outrage over Elvis Presley's jungle hip-movements 20 years ago.

The danger here, for all the alleged innocence, is that the punk rockers have so pre-packaged themselves that they are already trapped in the hungry machinery they have tried to reject. The music papers, so powerful in aligning the tastes of the record-buying public, were quick to launch a bandwagon, particularly as nothing much had turned up in recent months to fill their pages. And the major record companies, still warm from their tussle earlier in the year over the best Jamaican reggae groups, are busy making sure they each have a punk property in the stable.

Before long, the punks too will find it difficult to escape the pressures of success, the money, the lure of security; and besides, the anger will seem less urgent over the giant PA system at Wembley or Earls Court. There is little chance that they will escape looking incongruous, when the millions start pouring in.

Weekend Competition

No 2443 **Set by Luke Russell**

The Bible may have its share of poetry, violence and sex, but it is very low on broad humour. Competitors are asked to rewrite the passages of their choice in the style of Lewis Carroll, P. G. Wodehouse, S. J. Perelman, Ogden Nash . . . And so on. By 7 January.

No 2440 **Set by Fat Jeff**

New York magazine recently ran a (highly derivative) competition about the 'famous last words' of celebrities who are still with us. Gerry Ford's last words were: 'You mean *this* button?'

Report **by Len the Unlucky**

Oh dear. You always know you're in for a rum comp when your regulars – your Sharplesses, your Faggs – are hopelessly off-centre. It makes you moan with shame for having put these intelligent and fastidious men to such fruitless trouble. (My, how we pinched Fat Jeff up in the comp dormitory!) The entries were predictably divided into three categories: remarks that revealed the corpse's fate, remarks that revealed his character, and remarks made directly to the Maker. About 200 of each, in fact, and *still* no real corkers. £1 per quote.

EDWARD HEATH: 'I said STARBOARD, you silly bugger!' PRESIDENT CARTER: 'Ah hope the Lawd strikes me dead if ah evah lie to the great American people.' DUKE OF EDINBURGH: 'Now if you medical johnnies would just pull the finger out . . .' DAVID FROST: 'Yes? – The gentleman at the back with the long white beard.'

TOM DONNELLY

GERALD FORD: 'Did you ever see a worm this big before, Betty?' MARGARET THATCHER: 'I'd no idea, Ted, that sailing was as exciting as this.'

ROBIN CHASE

R. D. LAING: 'One has to learn to live with schizophrenics.' LORD GEORGE-BROWN: 'Just one for the road.'

PETER ALEXANDER

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE: 'Come up and see me some time.' MICHAEL FOOT: 'Well I'm damned.'

P. W. R. FOOT

EDITOR OF THE *Guardian*: 'Have my bier – I keep coffin it up.' CYRIL SMITH: 'I think you'd better get Pickfords.'

ERIC MCPHERSON

LIZ TAYLOR: 'I guess this is for keeps.'

PETER VEALE

DON REVIE: 'And if Luxembourg beat Italy six-nil in Rome . . .' IAN SMITH: 'Not in my lifetime.'

W. J. WEBSTER

BRUCE FORSYTH: 'It'll be nice to see Him, to see Him nice.'

JACK DAVIS

GERALD FORD: 'Gee, padre . . . you mean I've got to flap my wings and play a harp at the same time?'

RUSSELL LUCAS

ENOCH POWELL: 'I think it's time for one of my pills, Nurse M'boko.'

JOHN SHARP

PRINCESS ANNE: 'Kiss me, Harvey.'

MORAY MCGOWAN

BERNARD DELFONT: '*Already*, already?'

ANDREW PAUL

GARY GILMORE: 'I'm Gary – Fry me.'

ERIC HITCH

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Tony Miles
Chess

No. 12 Awarding Titles

At the FIDE congress held in conjunction with the Haifa Olympiad more than 20 new grandmaster titles were awarded. This represents an alarming increase (about 20 per cent) in the GM population and gives substance to the theory that titles, both IM and GM, are being devalued. The current qualification system is open to all sorts of abuse from the commonly accepted practice of arranging title-gaining tournaments stocked with over-rated and preferably ageing players, to blatant fixing of results and bribery. Furthermore, a prime qualification for titles now appears to be strong support in the internal politics of FIDE.

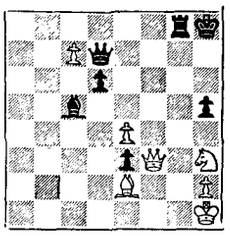
One of the fundamental disadvantages of the system is that a player can have two good tournaments in three years and as many bad ones as he likes and still become an IM or GM. It was with these points in mind that a proposal was put forward to restrict title awards to players with ratings of 2400 and 2500 and over respectively. This seemed an eminently sensible idea, but after some quibbling about the figures it was rejected. Perhaps one day the powers that be will invent various grades of GM, for instance 'GM' in heavy inverted commas (say up to 2500), real GM (2500-2600) and super-GM (2600 and above).

Anyway, it is always difficult to judge standards. Consider this week's game:

1. P-K4, P-K3; 2. P-Q4, P-Q4; 3. N-QB3, B-N5; 4. P-K5, Q-Q2; 5. N-B3, P-QN3; 6. B-Q2, B-R3; 7. B x B, N x B; 8. 0-0, N-N1. It is customary to delay this move until white plays Q-K2, but here it is difficult to find a good waiting move. If, for instance, black plays 8 . . . N-K2 then he cannot preserve his 'good' KB. Possibly best is 8 . . . B-B1 followed by . . . N-K2-B4 and B-K2; **9. N-K2, B-K2;** The exchange of these bishops would favour white, but 9 . . . B-B1 would seem better than the text. Now black never manages to develop K-side since . . . N-KR3 allows B x N. **10. R-B1.** Preparing to open the Q-side and exploit black's lack of development. **10 . . . P-QN4.** Very loosening. **11. N-B4, P-KR4;** Likewise, but N-R5 was threatened. **12. P-QN3, B-R6; 13. R-N1, P-R4; 14. P-B4, P-QB3; 15. P-B5.** Already black is lost. He must try to extricate the B before it is trapped by N-K1-B2. **15 . . . B-N5; 16. B-B1, P-QR5; 17. N-Q3, B-R4; 18. P x P, P x P; 19. Q x P, Q-R2; 20. B-N5, B-B2; 21. R x N ch!** Far better than 21. Q x Q. **21 . . . Q x R; 22. Q x P ch, K-B1; 23. N-B4, R-QR2; 24. N-R4, Q-K1; 25. Q x KP!!** A beautiful conclusion. **25 . . . P x Q; 26. N(B4)-N6 ch, Q x N.** Or 26 . . . K-B2; 27. N x R ch, K-B1; 28. N(R4)-N6 ch. winning. **27. N x Q ch, K-K1; 28. N x R . . .** with three extra pawns. Black could have spared himself the rest. **28 . . . R-R5; 29. R-Q1, N-K2; 30. B x N, K x B; 31. N-N6 ch, K-B2; 32. N-B4, B x P; 33. P x B, R x N; 34. R-QB1, K-K1; 35. P-B6, K-Q1; 36. P-B7 ch, K-B1; 37. P-N3, R-QR5; 38. R-B6, R x P; 39. R x P, P-N4; 40. R-Q6, R-Q7; 41. P-K6, K x P; 42. P-K7 Resigns.**

Well, who was the loser of the game? Certainly not a very good player, maybe a weak IM? In fact it was the world champion Anatoly Karpov being annihilated by the Russian GM Efim Geller in the Soviet championship now being played in Moscow.

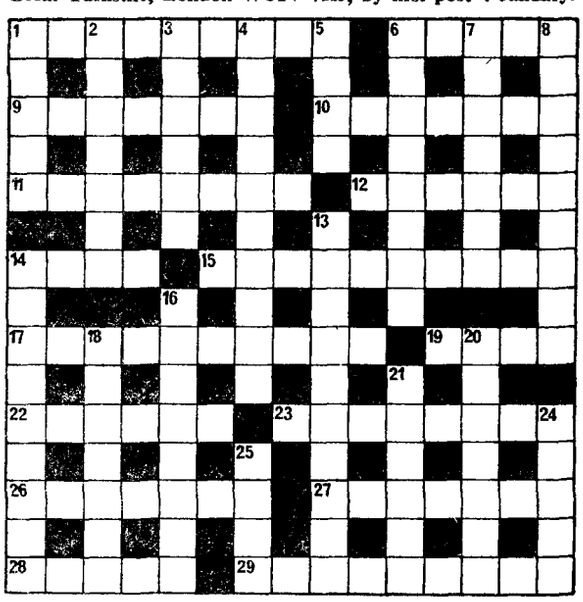
Problem 12:
White to play. How should the game go? Entries to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 5 January.



Solution to Problem 10:
1 . . . P-N6! 2. P x P, P-B7!; 3. R x P, R-N1 forcing mate. If 2. K-R4, P-N7; 3. R-R1, R-N1; 4. K-N3, R-N1 ch; 5. K-R2, R-R1 ch; 6. K-N3, R-R8 wins.

Weekend Crossword 1195

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1195, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 4 January.



ACROSS

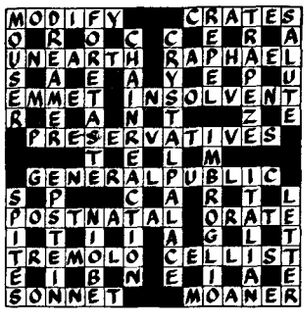
1. Without us the fool would be roaming free (9).
6. Born, took food and died, diminished (5).
9. Without a translator this passage would be precise (7).
10. One of these sounds would be made by doubly strange return (7).
11. All codes when deciphered are given this name (8).
12. If I left this dish it would do for a rascal (6).
14. Supplies an extra tool, we hear (4).
15. Lots of prisoners changing as being set free (10).
17. Shaw's house (10).
19. Wicked as a wicked one after being beheaded (4).
22. Physical attributes of finer vessels (6).
23. Preacher who makes the right always come last (8).
26. One who takes little account and makes charges? (7).
27. Seeming to be frightened in a royal role (7).
28. Fed up among the journalists at editorial conferences (5).
29. Limited in *The Apple Cart* (9).

DOWN

1. Opinions which may be delivered in an aside (5).
2. Remarked that it was not like a birthday cake (7).
3. Genuinely make friends anew (6).
4. Material on a cape or mountain (10).
5. The prophet turns up for a drink (4).
6. Sam's prison in a prison (8).
7. The fast bowler is a loyal chap (7).
8. It means the sack for the lad is crazy about a girl (9).
13. Resentment about anxieties is kind of novel (10).
14. Greeks formerly appearing in Asian guise (9).
16. Emphasised things to eat up (8).
18. Turned to Capri for fruit (7).
20. Looking to strive for superiority over a forward (7).
21. Town which has modern means of flood relief? (6).
24. Artist who has to get rid of hot air? (5).
25. Cabin key (4).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1193



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NEW STATESMAN

Vol. 92 No. 2387

Contents

858 **James Fenton:** Gang Warfare in Westminster
859 **David Evans:** The Most Highly Taxed Nation?
860 **Allan Ashbolt:** Devaluation Down Under
861 **Michael Leapman:** So You Want to Join the Party?
862 **Mark Boxer:** Blaspheming in My Youth
862 **Peter Wilby:** When Students Grow Up
864 **John Griffith:** The English Connection
864 **Margarita Jimenez:** High Noon in Madrid
866 **Profile of John Biffen**
867 **Jeremy Bentham:** Distaste of Punishment
868 **A. J. P. Taylor:** London Diary
870 **Martin Staniland:** Outside the Whale
871 **Arthur Marshall:** A Good Read
872 **Letters to the Editor**

Books and Arts

874 **David Caute:** The Socialist Register
875 **Matthew Coady:** Eric Hiscock
Other reviews by Frances Yates, Eric Korn, J. H. Plumb, Christopher Hitchens, J. G. Ballard
880 **John Coleman:** Films
880 **Ian Hamilton:** Television
882 **Julian Barnes:** Keats Appeal
882 **Benedict Nightingale:** Theatre
883 **Eric Sams:** Opera
883 **Mark Kidel:** Rock
884 **Weekend Competition**
885 **Chess and Crossword**

Poems by D. J. Enright and Wisława Szymborska

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